THREE GATES

EDNA A. BROWN

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AUTHOR

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THREE GATES

By
EDNA A. BROWN

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ANTOINETTE INGLIS

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Three Gates

Printed in U. S. A.

For Agatha,
who wanted me to write this book

88500

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THREE GATES

CHAPTER ONE

Tells about the Apple Orchard

IT was the kind of weather when bureau drawers stick and needles rust in their cushions. In New England such days usually come in midsummer but this especial morning was in late September, and a September day ought to be clear and crisp, with a frolicsome wind chasing white cloud-sheep about a blue sky.

Out in the orchard the tangled wet grass made a fine place for fallen apples to hide from a little girl's searching fingers. Polly Winsor didn't in the least mind picking up the windfalls from the turf which Uncle Jack kept cut

with the lawn-mower, but she did *not* like to stick her hand down in the long grass. There was always a chance of plunging a finger into the heart of a rotten apple or of disturbing a hungry wasp at breakfast.

Eight apple-trees stood in the orchard, and it was Polly's daily business to pick up the windfalls. On the lawn stood a bushel basket, and, when it was full, Uncle Jack took it away and gave Polly a bright nickel. Sometimes the basket was the two-bushel size, and that meant a dime for Polly's toy bank. One of the trees bore small dark-red fruit, and it took a great many of these apples to fill the basket. Polly was fond of these little red apples. They were so juicy and hot with sunshine when she bit into them. People called them "sap-sons," but Grandma said that when she was a little girl their name was "sops-of-wine." Even Grandma and Uncle Jack were proud of

the sapson tree because it was the only one in the village of Longfield.

On either side of the mown lawn lay flower-beds gay with old-fashioned flowers: larkspurs, foxgloves, tiger-lilies, nasturtiums, bleeding-hearts, and big yellow ones which Mother called calendulas, but Grandma liked their older name of "mary-golds."

Between the orchard and the street stood the white house where Grandma and Uncle Jack and Mother and Polly lived. Polly and Mother had not always lived in Longfield. Once that was a place called "Grandma's-on-a-visit" and Polly's home was with Mother and Daddy in a big brick building near a city park. But four years ago, when Polly was only three, Daddy went to South America with some other men to explore a great river and find out about the plants that grew in the woods along its bank, and about the curious

animals and birds and the Indians who lived in those forests. An accident happened to their boat on this strange river, and Daddy did not come home again. After a time Mother and Polly came to live in Longfield with Grandma Clifford and Uncle Jack.

There was a lawn in front of the white house, and a fence shut it off from the street. This fence had three gates, of iron, painted green. People called the house "Three Gates." These gates were all in line, but just the same they were called the Back Gate, the Side Gate, and the Front Gate. The Back Gate usually stood open, the Side Gate was usually shut, and the Front Gate, which dragged a little, stuck about a foot from the post, and wouldn't close at all.

Every morning at half-past seven, Mother and Uncle Jack started for the city, twenty-five miles away. Mother taught school and

Uncle Jack worked in an architect's office, helping make plans to build houses and churches and business blocks. Sometimes they drove to the city in Uncle Jack's little car, but most of the time they walked to the station and took the train.

On Saturdays Mother was at home, and Uncle Jack came back at noon. Of course Saturday was a holiday in Polly's school in Longfield.

Because of the rain the day before, there were more apples than usual to pick up on this especial Saturday, which was really too hot for any day at all. Polly had on her rubbers and she was sure that her two feet were the hottest things anywhere around. You needn't think she wanted to wear those rubbers, but it was a choice between them and bare feet. When Polly considered the rotten apples and the chewing wasps with prickers on one end, well—

she preferred to wear rubbers in that long wet grass. Wouldn't you prefer to?

One apple on top of another finally found every one picked up. The lawn lay smooth and clean, and the long grass was tidy. The biggest basket of all stood heaped, which meant another dime for Polly's bank. Polly sometimes thought there were altogether too many apples in that back yard. Grandma did not agree with her. She thought there were none too many for pies and apple sauce and rosy jelly, to eat on waffles or to take to sick people.

Polly's way to the house lay past the long flower border, and there was a bumblebee head down in a foxglove blossom. The trumpet was deep and Polly couldn't resist holding the edges of the tube together for an instant. How Mr. Bee did buzz! Angry as he was, he couldn't sting and he couldn't back out till Polly chose to let him. That was quite soon.

The big blundering bee rumbled and complained so crossly as he flew away that one did hope he would feel better-natured before reaching his home and Mrs. Bee. His crooked legs were yellow with pollen from the many foxgloves he had visited.

> " Oh, velvet bee, you're a dusty fellow,
> You've powdered your legs with gold! "

sang Polly as she watched him grumble away. The day she was seven years old, Mother read her that poem, and Polly knew every word of it.

Then she picked all the brown seeds from the stems of the tiger-lilies and started for the house.

A plank walk along the north fence, three steps to the back piazza, the screen door, the tiny hall, and Grandma's pleasant kitchen with a table just at hand for Polly's little basket

full of the choicest sapsons. Grandma baking cookies, Mother washing the last of the Saturday cooking-dishes.

And on the table lay a letter directed to

"Miss Pauline Winsor,
Three Gates,
Longfield, Mass."

CHAPTER TWO

Tells about Silver Sands

WHEN she saw that letter, Polly stopped only to take off her rubbers, but while they were coming off she twinkled from the tips of her toes to the top of her bobbed brown head. Mother was twinkling, too, and so was Grandma.

The envelope hadn't been through the mail, and Polly knew Mother's pretty writing which ran along like printing, but she also knew something nice was going to happen. The air was simply full of it.

Her letter read:

"*At ten, or earlier,*
Justin Clifford
Invites Miss Pauline
To go for a picnic
At Silver Sands."

How Polly laughed! Her gray eyes shone like stars. Justin wasn't a person at all as one would think from the note, but the name of Uncle Jack's little car. Spell it "Just-tin," and you will see what Polly's uncle meant.

"O goody, goody!" she exclaimed, dancing about the kitchen. "Are we to go bathing? May I take my bathing-suit? Grandma, will you go, too?"

"Not into the Atlantic Ocean," Grandma answered firmly, "though I don't know but that I should like to sit in it on a day like this."

"Yes, indeed, your bathing-suit," said Mother. "You and I will take a dip. Uncle Jack is staying in town for a ball game and won't be home to go with us. Would you like to invite Carola?"

Would she like to invite her best friend? How many pleasant things this hot morning was bringing!

Polly flew to the telephone and when Carola, at the other end of the wire, knew about that picnic, another white house saw another little dancing girl. Mrs. Thorne was willing that Carola should go to the beach. She telephoned about the lunch.

" The lunch is packed," said Polly's mother. " There's plenty for every one. Don't bother about any more. Just let Carola bring a sweater and her bathing-suit and wear a not-too-good dress. We'll probably be home by six, but don't worry if we aren't."

Mrs. Thorne said she wouldn't worry and that most of Carola's clothes were not-too-good after the way she had used them all summer, and that she had just bought a basket of Concord grapes, which Carola should bring.

Polly ran upstairs, washed her face and hands, and put on a clean gingham dress. Mother said she needn't wear a hat, but that

she must take a sweater. It might be cool at the beach. Grandma said it might even be cold. She didn't trust any weather after the middle of September.

"May Kerry Crumb go?" Polly asked her mother. "He is sitting in the car this minute."

In his own mind Kerry Crumb was perfectly determined to go wherever his family was going, whether he were invited or not. Kerry was Uncle Jack's Irish terrier, six months old, and he loved the whole world and everything in it, even Mittens,—Polly's cat. Mittens didn't love Kerry.

Mother said that Kerry might go and Polly ran out to tell him so. Kerry wiggled all over but would not set one paw outside the car. He felt safer to stay where he was.

Carola arrived with the grapes, and there was a white paper package tied to the handle

of the basket. Mother put all the lunch and the thermos bottles and the wraps in the back of the car. The bathing-suits and towels were rolled in Uncle Jack's rubber blanket. She put in a steamer rug and a cushion for Grandma.

"Now, are we all ready?" she asked, looking round. "Into the back seat, chickens. Grandma will sit in front with me. Pocketbook, house key, car keys,—all here."

Mother was dressed in white with a soft white hat pulled over her hair. She looked much like a little girl herself as she started the engine.

The road to Silver Sands took them as Grandma said "across country." That meant that they drove nearly all the way on pleasant shady roads that led from village to village and didn't go through any large towns. The roadsides were colorful with asters and

goldenrod and wild clematis covering the stone walls. In some of the fields men were cutting the cornstalks and tying them into shocks like little Indian tents. Other fields held piles of yellow pumpkins and purple cabbages. And everywhere there were apples. These did not interest Polly.

Kerry sat between the two little girls on the back seat. His head was on a level with theirs, and he kept giving them hasty kisses to show how glad he was that he was going on a picnic. His master often called him an "angel-puppy," and for once Kerry deserved the name.

The drive to Silver Sands took an hour and a half and only the last five miles was over the State road. The rest of the way there was hardly any traffic.

"We should make better time were Jack at the wheel," said Mother when they were almost

there. "But my passengers are too precious for me to take any risks with fast driving."

"I like better to have you drive," said Grandma. "We shall get there soon enough."

When they reached Silver Sands they found other picnic parties. Several cars were already parked by the bath-house. Mother found a place for Justin, and she and the children took the rug and the luncheon and Grandma's book and umbrella down on the beach. Certainly it was not cold on that beach, but just as surely it was cooler than in Longfield, for a little salty breeze came from the ocean.

"We will go bathing right away," said Mother. "If we don't, we shall have to wait till after lunch."

Polly and Carola thought it much the best plan to bathe at once. They knew that people who walked into the ocean shortly after eating

came out with some very queer feelings inside them.

Only a part of the bath-house was open and the attendant gave Mother a room up a steep stair. That part seemed older than the rest of the building, and the door to their room was fastened by a hasp that went over an iron loop with a padlock through the loop.

Mother unlocked the padlock and the door opened inwards upon a tiny cell with a seat along one side, and three nails on the wall.

"One for Carola, one for Polly, and one for me," she said. "How about buttons? Any hard ones out of reach?"

Neither little girl took more than two minutes to get into her bathing-suit. Another half-minute answered to hang up their clothes so as to leave room for Mother, and they were down the steep stair and running across the beach to Grandma.

The tide was far out, and a long wide stretch of shiny wet sand lay between them and the blue water. Lazy lines of surf kept rolling in, curving in a white arc and crashing down on the sands.

"Mother said not to go in till she comes," Polly told Grandma.

"Will you please hold my beads?" asked Carola.

Mrs. Clifford put Carola's beads around her neck. When Mother came from the bath-house she gave Grandma another string of beads, her wrist-watch, and the pocket-book.

"You'd better give me the key to the bath-house," said Grandma.

"Goodness!" said Mother. "Where is the key?"

"I saw it on the seat in the dressing-room," said Carola.

"So did I," said Polly.

" But how could you lock the door? " inquired Grandma.

" It fastened with a padlock," Mother explained. Then she laughed and Carola laughed, but Polly looked troubled.

" Shall we have to go home in our bathing-suits? " she asked.

" No, my precious, we shall not. The attendant will have a duplicate key. She'll let us in."

" Edith, you'd better see about it now," said Grandma. " The woman may not be around when you and the children want to dress."

Mother went back to see about the key and the children ran down on the wet sands. Over part of the level surface rippled tiny waves about three inches deep.

Two girls rather older than Polly and Carola, and a nurse carrying a cunning baby, came down the beach. The baby could not

walk, but he wore a bathing-suit and his arms and legs were brown. The girls had spades and, when they reached the part of the beach where the little waves were breaking, they dug up the sand and made a round wall. As soon as the wall was done, the water filled the enclosed space. The nurse put the baby into this little outdoor bath-tub and gave him a toy boat to sail. Such a happy baby!

"I wish your mother would come," Carola said, after what seemed a very long time.

"Perhaps she couldn't find the bath-house woman," said Polly, but she, too, was anxious to get into those waves. She found a long streamer of kelp, long enough to use for a skipping-rope. Carola found another, and Polly, in her orange-colored suit, and Carola, in blue, went skipping down the beach. Grandma smiled to see their bright colors against the sea.

Two young men came running down the shore. One plunged directly into the ocean; the other stopped on the edge. "Is it cold, Bill?" he asked.

"Cold enough to shake your teeth out!" his friend replied. "Better go back for an ice-pick!"

At this, Carola and Polly looked at each other. How could the water be so cold as that when on shore people felt like human gum-drops? But it must be true, for the first young man came out and began to turn hand-springs to get himself warm.

"I wish I could do that," said Carola, watching him in admiration, and when they went back near Grandma, she tried it and so did Polly. It wasn't so easy as it looked, and they only got sand in their hair.

Kerry was tearing up and down the beach as fast as he could go. He chased the sand-

pipers till they stopped scrambling along the shore and took to their wings. He chased the shadows cast by gulls floating high in the air. He flew past Polly, digging a hole in the sand, and pulled her hair with his teeth so that it hurt. When she scolded him, he lay flat on his side and pretended he hadn't done it. He made himself extremely warm and then he went to the edge of the baby's bath-tub and took a drink.

" Oh, he will be sick! " exclaimed Carola.

Polly pulled him away, but soon Kerry learned something he didn't know before. He found out that salt water isn't good for little dogs to drink.

After a long time Mother came back. She had the bath-house key.

" There wasn't another key," she told them. " We had to open the padlock by pounding it with a stone."

"Did the woman like it?" Carola asked.

"She did not," said Mrs. Winsor. "But I think she should have given us a compartment with a different lock. Come, let's race to the ocean."

Kerry Crumb won the race, but he was no longer interested in that bad-tasting water. Its edge was plenty near enough for him.

Oh, but the Atlantic *was* cold! Carola and Polly screamed and ran ashore.

Mother laughed. She walked straight out until she reached the great rolling curves of the surf and she dived right through the next big wave when it came. The children saw her floating beyond it.

For a few moments they watched her. Sometimes, instead of diving into the wave, she would jump just as it reached her, and then fling herself backward upon it and ride inshore on its top. She was having a wonderful time

with those breakers, but Polly and Carola much preferred the sandy shallow edge.

Kerry sat and whined dolefully. He was sure that his whole family ought to come ashore at once.

Carola and Polly were finally thoroughly wet all over and were willing to go up to the bath-house and dress. Grandma gave them the key.

"This time we will leave the key outside the door," said Polly, and she laid it carefully on the corridor floor.

Rather sticky work getting out of wet suits and using towels that didn't like to absorb salt water. Worst of all, the door kept swinging in. The wooden button to fasten it was missing.

"This isn't a nice bath-house at all," said Carola, and she gave the door a hard push. Something slammed and the door stayed shut.

It stayed shut only too well. When the children were dressed and ready to leave, they could not open it.

For a moment, Polly looked ready to cry. Then her face cleared. "Mother will be coming and she'll let us out.'"

"But she said she should sit on the beach till we came," protested Carola.

"She'll wonder what's happened and come to see," comforted Polly. "But it's fiercely hot up here."

Just then somebody came into the little room below them, talking all the time to another person outside the building. She slammed her door.

"Perhaps she'll come up and let us out," whispered Carola. "I'm going to ask her," and she did so.

"Bless you, child," said the voice from below, "I would come, of course, only I've just

taken off my bathing-suit. But I'll call my friend."

In just about two minutes a fat lady, much out of breath, puffed up those narrow steep stairs and released the hasp which had fallen over its loop.

"I do *not* like this dressing-room," said Polly, after thanking the lady for letting them out. "I hope they never give it to us again."

"I think I'd better stay right here and keep this horrid door from doing anything else before your mother comes," said Carola. "You run and get her. And don't let that key get inside, will you?"

CHAPTER THREE

Tells about the Beach Picnic

SOMETIMES, on a Saturday picnic at Silver Sands, Mother built a fire of driftwood and cooked bacon and baked potatoes in the ashes, but she thought to-day was too warm for cooking on the beach to be any fun. It was to be a different kind of luncheon.

The little girls were hungry enough to eat even some things they didn't like, but they both liked sandwiches of graham bread and cottage cheese, and stuffed eggs, and Grandma's molasses cookies, and the grapes from Carola's basket. The surprise package tied to the handle was a box of chocolate peppermints. There was cold milk for everybody.

Kerry Crumb had a dog biscuit which he gnawed hungrily, and didn't seem to mind how much sand he ate as well. Polly tried to have him keep it on the rubber poncho, but Kerry preferred to stay on the poncho himself, and to keep the biscuit just over the edge on the sand.

"Why did Mr. Jack give him that name?" Carola asked.

"Because he is an Irish terrier and County Kerry is in Ireland," explained Mrs. Winsor, "and Crumb, because he was very tiny and just the color of the brown-bread crumbs left from supper the night he came."

Carola thought it a cunning name. She gave Kerry a peppermint, which he ate at once, and then didn't like the taste left in his mouth. Polly gave him some milk from the thermos bottle.

After luncheon, Mother lay down for a nap

on the rug, and Grandma and the children walked a long way up the beach, away to the cliff at its northern end, where the beach turned into brown rocks, and the road vanished into the sky. Kerry rushed around at full speed, poking his nose into the seaweed above high-water mark, and running for pebbles and sticks which the children threw for him. Kerry would be a tired little dog that night.

When they came back from their walk, Mother was sorting the dried rockweed. When it first drifted in on the tide, it was light-brown in color, and wet, with seed pods that popped when pinched. Then it dried and turned dark brown and finally became brittle and inky black. The pods and stems formed pretty curves and angles.

"What are you going to do with it, Mother?" Polly asked.

"See how lovely these little branches are,"

said Mother. "I am going to take home some of the prettiest ones and use them with my classes in design."

Polly was interested at once. She knew how lovely were the designs which Mother made from leaves and woodbine berries, and barberry clusters and bits of moss. Almost any growing thing gave Mother an idea for her classes. And Polly knew about placing a mirror to reflect the branch of berries and so make the design double, or even double it again, by using two mirrors. Mother was always doing tremendously interesting things with metal and leather and putty and paints and pots of dye, or even with plain pencils and paper.

Carola and Grandma were interested also, and a great deal of black, dried rockweed was sorted over until they were sure they had the prettiest sprays, and plenty of them. They

forgot all about Kerry, curled up on one corner of the rug for a nap. When they did remember him, he was gone.

Everybody jumped up to look for him, for Kerry was a valuable puppy and Uncle Jack thought a great deal of him. Kerry was so young and so friendly that he thought everybody he met was delightful. It would be terrible if Kerry were stolen.

But Kerry was not far up the beach, rolling about in the seaweed above high-water mark. He came when he was called, and they wished he had not come.

Kerry had found a fish which had been on the beach a good while, and how his pretty cinnamon-colored coat did smell! It was not pleasant to have him near them, even on the wide beach. To ride home with him seemed impossible.

"Dear me! what a naughty puppy!" ex-

claimed Mrs. Winsor. "What shall we do, Mother? He'll have to be washed."

"He certainly will," agreed Grandma. "And I don't see how. Is there any fresh water at the bath-house?"

"Not a drop," said her daughter. "I have made that attendant sufficient trouble as it is. What am I going to do? We can't walk up to a strange house and ask if our dog may have a bath!"

Grandma agreed that this could not be done. She took a handful of wet seaweed and scrubbed Kerry with it. The scrubbing did not improve matters, except to make Kerry understand that he was in disgrace.

"Nothing but soap and water will do any good," said Grandma. "Edith, you'll have to drive somewhere and buy a cake of salt-water soap. Then you can put on your bathing-suit and wash him in the ocean. Naughty Kerry!"

Kerry looked more wretched than ever. Mrs. Clifford usually fed him and she almost never scolded him. What had happened to his best friend?

Mrs. Winsor went off to get the soap and the disgraced Kerry was sternly commanded to lie down and to keep still. While she was gone, two interesting things happened.

First, they saw an airplane which flew so low above the beach that it seemed as though the pilot meant to land. But he only circled around, sometimes over the water and sometimes over the shore. He waved his hand to the people and everybody waved back. He flew around in a double loop and then he went straight away, disappearing over the headland to the north. It must be fun to be sky-riding on a blue-and-white September afternoon.

The other interesting thing happened right on the beach. Two young men in bathing-

suits came down to the water, one carrying a double-bladed paddle, and the other the most interesting boat Polly and Carola had ever seen.

It was so light that it could be carried on his shoulder, and it was only an oblong framework of narrow wooden strips with four enormous red rubber balls at the corners.

The minute the boat appeared a cry of pleasure went up from the beach. The children came running to ask for a ride on the "bubble-boat."

The young men said that the water was too rough that afternoon to take any passengers. Some day, when it was calm, the children might go. One of them took the boat out beyond the line of surf and then sat on the cross-pieces and paddled up and down. The four big wet red balls reflected the sunshine. The other young man sat down on the beach to await his

turn. Grandma asked him to tell them about the boat.

He said it was one of the kind they used for surf sports in the Hawaiian islands. Nobody at this beach had one before. Paddling it was great fun, but people who could not swim well ought never to try it. When the ocean was smooth, without breakers, and the bubble-boat could keep near shore in shallow water, they sometimes took the children, but never when the surf was as high as to-day.

Then he noticed Kerry and said he was a nice little fellow, and then he smelled that dreadful fish.

Grandma explained that her daughter had gone to buy the right kind of soap so that she could wash him in the ocean.

"Why, I'll wash him," said the young man. "I'm dressed for it, and I'm used to dogs."

When Mrs. Winsor came back with the

soap, she was glad not to have to get into her wet bathing-suit and take Kerry into the sea.

The young man covered him with lather and rinsed him and lathered him again and again. Poor Kerry looked very unhappy, but it was all his own fault. Finally the young man brought him out, smelling strongly of soap but of nothing else.

"I'm everlastingly obliged to you," said Mother.

"Glad to do it," said the young man pleasantly. "Better rub him dry. He's shivering and may take cold."

He went away to take his turn with the bubble-boat, and Mother and Carola and Polly all rubbed Kerry with the bath-towels which would have to be washed, anyway. He was a sad little dog with a very poor opinion of strange young men and of the Atlantic Ocean.

When he was as dry as they could make

him, Polly buttoned him into her sweater and made him lie down in the warm sand right in the sunshine.

"He won't have pneumonia now, will he, Mother?" she asked anxiously.

"I don't think he will have so much as a sniffle," said Mother. "He has stopped shivering and is warm to touch."

"Uncle Jack's angel puppy will be clean enough to sleep on his bed to-night," sighed Polly. "I do think, Mother, when Grandma lets Uncle Jack have Kerry in his room, you might let Mittens sleep with me."

"I do *not* approve of a pussy in a little girl's bed," laughed Mother.

CHAPTER FOUR

Tells about Sunday Breakfast

IT was a question whether Justin would reach Longfield first, or whether the sun would reach the horizon. Justin won the race by only a few minutes. When he stopped to leave Carola at her home, three-quarters of the sun's disc was flaming a good-night to the world. When Mother and Polly were taking the things from the car, the sun was half gone, and, by the time Justin was behind his bedroom door, only pink clouds and rosy twilight were left to tell the story of that happy Saturday.

Kerry slept nearly all the way home, his head and shoulders in Polly's lap, the rest of him in Carola's. Kerry had spent a hard day.

On the porch Mittens was waiting, his pretty

little double front paws tucked under his white vest. Those paws had extra toes, so that they really looked like tiny mittens. When he first came to Polly as a kitten baby, he tried to walk and tumbled over his front paws. Then he sat down and lifted first one paw and then the other, looking at them as though wondering what on earth was the matter with his feet.

Mittens no longer fell over his extra toes. He flew after the autumn leaves like a little fur whirlwind. He climbed the highest trees in the neighborhood to sit on branches no bigger than twigs, and swaying in the wind. Very often he hustled up the vine trellises to the sill of Polly's window. Once Grandma looked from her room to see Mittens walking the ridgepole of the house next door. A ladder left by a painter gave him the chance to explore a roof. He was always getting into open bureau drawers or trying to squeeze himself

into boxes if the covers were ajar. He thought it his right to be present at the opening of every package brought into the house. When Mother placed fresh flowers about the rooms, Mittens at once went to look them over. And *nobody,* from Grandma down to Polly, ever left a dress or a garment on a bed, but Mittens was found curled up on it.

When Mittens saw Polly, he got up at once and ran to meet her. He put his head down on the walk and almost turned a somersault. Then he flopped completely over and purred loudly.

Polly picked Mittens up and kissed him. She told him she didn't think it was fair to leave him behind and to take Kerry. She also told him how badly Kerry had behaved. Mittens purred even louder. He had missed Polly and was glad to see her, but he didn't care a whisker for Kerry.

Uncle Jack was back from his ball game. The big basket of apples was gone, and a shining ten-cent piece was waiting for Polly. She went at once for her toy bank which was quite an unusual kind.

It looked like a little metal house sitting in a front yard surrounded by a fence. The house had two front doors. When Polly turned a handle, a little metal dog with a pleasant expression and a shaggy tail came out of the left-hand door. In his mouth he carried a plate on which he took the piece of money. When the handle turned again, the little brown dog moved across the front yard of the house and went in at the other door. He always put the money into the bank; one could hear it falling from his plate. But he never brought any out again.

After her long day at the beach, Polly was so sleepy that her head began to nod before

she left the table. Uncle Jack said she must have beach sand in her eyes. Something was certainly the matter with them, for she didn't even hear the last half of Mother's bedtime story.

The next thing she knew the sun was shining across her bed and a crisp cool breeze ruffled the muslin curtains at the windows. That breeze smelled as though the day really belonged to September and was not one lost from midsummer.

Polly sat up. Her bed was in an alcove of the room she and Mother shared. Mother, over by the other window, was still asleep. This was Sunday and Polly knew that her family would like to sleep later than on days when they had to rush for trains, so she cuddled down under her blankets to think about the waves and the gulls and the bubble-boat. But she kept her face toward Mother's bed. The

moment Mother's eyes opened, Polly intended to dash across that room for a morning cuddle.

From the window she could see the top of the sapson tree. Ever so many cunning little yellow birds were flitting about its branches. All the birds appeared to be going in one direction. Perhaps the sapson was a one-way tree for air traffic, with its branches reserved for birds bound south.

What was that queer sound in the kitchen? Somebody was rattling dishes. Grandma never made so much noise. That other queer sound was Kerry's toe-nails clicking on the floor. Uncle Jack must be downstairs. Polly half-remembered hearing him say something about going off early if the morning were pleasant. He must be getting his own breakfast.

Presently she heard Kerry clicking upstairs and then the door of her room opened a crack.

Kerry stuck his nose in, and Uncle Jack's voice said "Edith!" in a loud whisper.

Mother couldn't have been so sound asleep as she looked. "Yes, what is it?" she replied at once.

"Edith, I don't know what's the matter with the oatmeal. It looks like putty."

"Don't eat it then," said Polly's mother.

"But I want it for my breakfast," whispered Uncle Jack. "Stop that, you pesky little demon."

His sister roused a little more. "It can't be spoiled, if you mean what was left from yesterday."

"It looks like putty," repeated Uncle Jack. "Shut up, you angel pup!"

Polly couldn't pretend any longer. She giggled right out and Kerry gave a little yelp.

"Don't let that dog wake Mother," said Mrs. Winsor. "She was tired last night. Take

him away, Jack, and I'll come down and see what is the matter."

"It looks like putty," her brother announced for the third time. "Whew! I must rescue the toast from the power of the flame."

Uncle Jack shut the door and Mother sat up in bed. She smiled at Polly and pulled on her pretty pink kimono and reached for her slippers. "I shall have to go down and see what my little brother wants," she said.

"May I come?" begged Polly. "I do so want to know *what* looks like putty."

"Come along," said Mother. "It may *be* putty, for all I know."

Polly hopped into her red kimono and slippers and they went down to the kitchen. Uncle Jack was looking dubiously at the contents of a saucepan boiling on the gas-stove.

Uncle Jack was extremely fond of oatmeal. Much to Polly's bewilderment he would even

choose it for lunch at a city restaurant. To eat porridge on a cold winter morning was one thing, but to choose it to eat in a tea-room when one might order creamed chicken or a baked egg in a cunning nest of spinach was more than Polly could understand. Uncle Jack liked oatmeal even better than ice-cream. No wonder he was disappointed at the way it acted this morning.

Polly looked into the saucepan and saw a queer, colorless, greasy mess resembling putty as much as anything. Then she looked up at Mother's face, and that wore a puzzled expression.

"*I* never saw anything like it," Mother admitted. "Was it in the refrigerator?"

"It was," said Uncle Jack. "A bowl full. Left from yesterday. I told Mother I would eat it this morning."

"Have you tasted it?" asked his sister.

"Once. No more, thanks."

"It must have spoiled," mused Mrs. Winsor, "but I don't see why it should look so queer. Can't you eat that quick-cooking kind for once, Jacky? Or some shredded wheat?"

"I'd as soon eat excelsior," said her brother. "I don't like that quick oatmeal half so well as this, but if you know where the package is, lead me to it."

"What *is* the matter with the oatmeal?" Polly asked when she and Mother were going back to their room.

"I can't imagine, darling. Perhaps Grandma may know."

Grandma did know. An hour later, they had breakfast together in the alcove by the sunny kitchen window. Uncle Jack planned that table with the seat on either side. Polly loved the breakfast-nook. She and Grandma used it for their noon lunch, because it was

cosier for two alone. Besides, it saved Grandma many steps. There was a delft blue runner on the table and the napkins were blue and the breakfast dishes a clear yellow.

This morning the table held a vase full of orange and cream-colored California poppies which looked like butterflies ready for flight. And there was a blue bowl piled with dark blue Concord grapes. Such a pretty breakfast! Only to see that table made Polly hungry.

" Grandma," she asked, " what made Uncle Jack's oatmeal that funny color? "

" It isn't oatmeal at all," replied Grandma.

" It isn't! " exclaimed her daughter. " What has he cooked up, Mother? "

" The bowl of pie-crust I was keeping on ice for my next pies," replied Grandma. " No wonder you didn't recognize it, Edith. I never myself saw pie-crust brought to a boil before."

CHAPTER FIVE

Tells about Grandmother Thorne

THE next Friday, Carola invited Polly to come home with her after school. Grandma said Polly might go.

Carola and Polly were both in the second grade and their teacher was Miss Rand. She had been teaching for many years and knew just how to make lessons interesting for little girls. And when two little girls were especially fond of each other, she let them sit together as long as they did not talk too much nor do anything disorderly. Some teachers are not so understanding.

Carola and Polly sat side by side in the fourth row of seats in Miss Rand's schoolroom. On this afternoon when Carola knew that

Polly might come home with her, it was hard to pay attention to their work.

Three o'clock came at last and school was over for the pupils in the first two grades. When one became a third-grade scholar, school kept half an hour later. Three o'clock on an autumn day meant two hours to play with Carola.

They ran nearly all the way to Carola's home. The Thornes lived in a big white house set in large grounds with many flowers and trees about it, and there were more people in Carola's family than in Polly's.

Besides Carola's father and mother there was Grandmother Thorne. She was much older than Polly's grandma and not very strong, so that she nearly always stayed in a big sunny upstairs sitting-room with a pleasant young woman to take care of her.

Then there was Susan, Carola's older sister.

Susan was fifteen, which seemed very grown-up to the little girls.

Carola also had two brothers. Richard was only four. He couldn't pronounce his name and called himself "Wicky," so everybody called him that. Her older brother was twelve and he had an odd name. At least, Polly thought it odd until Grandmother Thorne told her that when Massachusetts was first settled most parents called their children by old-fashioned names like Patience and Remembrance, Pardon, Hopestill, and Truth. Nearly three hundred years ago a little boy in the Thorne family was named Dutee, which was the way they spelled duty then.

When he grew up and married and had a little son, he named his baby Dutee. And when that baby grew up, he did exactly the same thing, and they went on doing it. Carola's father was called Dutee, and her

brother Dutee was the eleventh little boy in the Thorne family who had been so named during those many, many years.

Every day every one of the Thorne children went to spend a few moments with their grandmother, and Carola suggested to Polly that they go up to her room.

"Oh, perhaps, if she feels quite rested, she'll show us the little old tea-set," said Polly. "Will you ask her?"

"Yes," said Carola. "And then we'll go to the barn and saddle Silverheels."

Carola knocked on Grandmother's door and Miss Somers opened it. She said that Madam Thorne would be glad to see them for a few moments.

Carola's grandmother was sitting near the open window in a big stuffed chair of the kind called a wing-chair. They are comfortable for people who are old or not very strong or well

because the high back and sides keep off the breezes.

Polly loved to look at Carola's grandmother. She had snow-white hair that waved away from a face which was sweet and serene whenever Polly saw it. She was always dressed in soft, cream-white woolen dresses, and on her thin white hands were several rings with beautiful shining stones. Polly's mother had once painted a picture of Grandmother Thorne sitting in her wing-chair.

As the children came to her, she smiled and held out her hand to Polly. Carola, she had already seen that morning.

"How is Polly to-day?" she asked.

"Very well, please, thank you," said Polly, getting a little mixed, but she took Grandmother's hand, and did not forget to curtsey. Mother had told her that whatever else she forgot, she *must* remember to curtsey to

Grandmother Thorne. The hand felt differently from those of other people, as though it no longer did anything harder than hold a magazine or a handkerchief. It felt as though it were resting.

Grandmother asked how school had gone that afternoon and they told her all the news, how Ella had brought a tiny turtle for the aquarium; how Marion had disgraced the whole room by chewing gum, when all the second grade knew perfectly well that no lady *ever* chews gum; how Miss Rand read them a poem about Jack Frost and wrote it on the board so that every one could learn it. Carola told her about the first drawing-lesson of the term, and how the drawing-teacher said that Polly's work was best of all.

Grandmother smiled at Polly. "That will please Mother," she said. "Be sure to tell her, Polly dear."

Polly meant to tell Mother, but she was glad Carola was the one to speak about it now.

"Grandmother," asked Carola, "may we look at the little tea-set? Will it tire you to have us?"

"Not at all," said Grandmother. "You may ask Miss Somers to get it."

Carola went to speak to the nurse who had gone into Grandmother's bedroom. Presently she returned, carrying a wooden box.

"My dear, will you bring up the little stand?" Grandmother asked Polly.

Polly could easily carry the light low table. She placed it by Grandmother's side and Carola put the box upon it. Grandmother turned the key.

Inside was a doll's tea-set. It was very, very old, and it was made of real silver. Grandmother said it had been made in England when George the Fourth was king of that

country, and that was a great many years ago. So you can see that it was right to regard the tea-set as unusual.

The teapot stood two inches high and held about a tablespoonful of water, and it would really pour.

Just then, Miss Somers brought Madam Thorne her afternoon tea on a tray. Grandmother asked her to fill the tiny silver teapot from the big one, and to put cream in the wee pitcher and sugar in the sugar-bowl. Miss Somers did all this and also rinsed the silver cups in hot water.

Then Grandmother asked Polly if she would be so kind as to pour her a cup of tea.

Think of the fun of pouring tea into those cups like inverted thimbles! Polly was so pleased that she was simply obliged to jump up and down,—very gently of course, so as not to shake Grandmother's chair.

" I like the cream and sugar put in first, my dear," said Grandmother.

The spoons which belonged to the set were just three-quarters of an inch long, and their bowls held about ten grains of the granulated sugar with which Miss Somers filled the bowl.

" Will this spoonful be enough? " asked Polly politely.

" That will be right for me," replied Grandmother, " and about four drops of cream."

Polly took great pains with the cream and then she poured in the tea and gave the little silver cup with its spoon and silver saucer to Madam Thorne. Then she took another little leap of joy and asked Miss Somers how she liked her tea.

Miss Somers preferred it without either cream or sugar, so that was easy. Polly poured some for Carola and for herself and emptied the sugar-bowl between the two cups.

Nothing could ever taste quite so good as that spoonful of tea from that dainty wee tea-set. And think of the care with which it had been kept through the years!

Polly and Carola each had a biscuit from Grandmother's tray, and then Miss Somers brought a soft cloth and a brass finger-bowl of hot water.

Very carefully the girls washed and dried the little silver service and replaced it in the velvet-lined box. That box was most interesting, for the lining lay in hollows for each little dish to fit into so that they never rubbed each other.

Miss Somers took the box to put away, and she looked at the children and smiled and then looked at the door. Carola and Polly understood. They got up at once.

"Thank you so much for showing us the tea-set and letting us have tea," said Polly.

"I just loved it, Grandmother Thorne," and she kissed Madam Thorne's soft cheek. Carola also kissed her.

"Come again soon, dears," said Grandmother. "I enjoy having little girls pour my tea."

When she reached the door, Polly whirled around to make another curtsey. She felt it very little to do after being allowed to pour tea from that precious teapot.

They went downstairs softly till they were sure Grandmother could not be disturbed, and then they ran the rest of the way to the barn to see Silverheels.

Silverheels, the pony, belonged to all four of the Thorne children, and they loved him dearly, even Susan and Dutee, who had grown too big to ride him. But they still liked to harness him to the little basket cart for a drive.

Silverheels was black, with four white feet

and a white star on his forehead, and he was used to being hugged by loving arms and to having his star and his velvet nose kissed. He was not a shaggy pony, but looked like a little horse, and his back was just the right height for Carola and Polly to rest their arms on, so you can see that Silverheels was not very tall.

On this afternoon, he was enjoying himself in a little yard at the side of the barn and when Carola offered him a lump of sugar, he came at once, and let her take him by the forelock. Carola had his bridle in her hand and slipped it over his head and fastened it. Polly was tugging the saddle from the barn.

"I'll give you a hand with that," said Dutee, coming up behind her.

"Oh, please do," said Polly. "It's very hard for Carola and me to pull it tight."

Dutee flopped the saddle-cloth and saddle on Silverheels' back, put the girth through the

buckle, braced it with one foot and tugged till the pony grunted.

"You're hurting him!" protested Carola.

"I am not," said her brother. "He swells himself out on purpose. The saddle will slip unless it's tighter than this."

Silverheels let out his breath and the saddle loosened at once. Dutee gave it another tug and took up the slack.

"There you are," he said, fastening the buckle. "Don't you go outside the gates, either of you."

Dutee put a hand on Silverheels' back and vaulted over him as though he were merely a fence. Then he went off to play tennis with Harry Emerson.

"You ride first," said Carola. "You're company."

"Let's both ride," said Polly. "We do sometimes."

"All right," Carola agreed. "Then you sit on the saddle."

So Polly sat on the saddle with her feet in the stirrups and Carola sat behind, with her arms around Polly, and they rode up and down the drive and on the grassy turf of the orchard where the boys were playing tennis.

That tennis game was going on under difficulties, for Dutee's setter puppy, known by the name of Beware-the-dog, was galloping up and down the court, trying to catch the ball, and getting very much in the way of the players.

Dutee did not send him away because he was trying to teach Beware-the-dog to bring back the balls that bounced off the court. He was also trying to train him to hunt for Mrs. Thorne's eyeglasses when she lost them, but Beware-the-dog was making better progress with the tennis balls than with the glasses.

There was plenty of room on the grounds of

the Thorne house for the children to enjoy Silverheels without going on the street. That was strictly forbidden. Carola and Polly must never take him outside the gates. Both Mother and Mrs. Thorne said so. The motor-cars were too many and too dangerous for a wee pony and little girls.

After riding double, they took turns alone, because it wasn't comfortable to let Silverheels trot with both on his back. When it was Polly's turn, she rode on the grass walks of the flower garden and before she could stop him, Silverheels bit off a big blue aster. She couldn't pull his head up in time.

Carola thought this was very funny. When she took her turn she rode straight to the aster bed and let him eat another.

"I want to see whether he likes the blue ones best," she said.

Silverheels was not particular as to color.

He took a pink one. When they tried a third time, he was no longer interested in asters.

"Now, let's take him into the house," said Carola.

Silverheels had often been up the piazza steps, so Carola rode him to the back door, which Polly held open for her. Silverheels went into the kitchen, where Bertha, the cook, seemed glad to see him. She gave him a cooky and told him he was a "sweet little fellow."

"We mustn't go into the other rooms," said Carola, "because of the floors. But Susan is going to make Silverheels some boots out of very thick cloth, so his feet won't hurt anything. When he has those, he can visit Daddy in the library. I think Silverheels would like the open fire. If Beware-the-dog can come in that part of the house, Silverheels ought to come, too."

They took the pony out of the kitchen, and

then they met Wicky and his nurse. Wicky wanted to ride Silverheels, so they put him in the saddle and let him hold the reins while they walked on either side, and the nurse came behind.

And then it was five o'clock and time for Polly to go home.

CHAPTER SIX

Tells How Polly Made Muffins

IT was high time that Polly came home, for Grandma needed her. That bad little Kerry ran in front of her when she was going down the steps. Grandma tripped over him and twisted her ankle and her right wrist, not very badly, but enough so that both should have rest. Careless Kerry was not hurt at all.

Grandma smiled at Polly and said she should feel all right if she sat still for a few moments before getting supper.

Polly always set the table, and she did this at once, putting doilies and china and silver in place, as nicely as any one could do. She looked to see if the flowers in the table vase were fresh. Grandma and Mother were par-

ticular about this. Then she went into the kitchen, where Grandma sat quietly in the rocking-chair. Polly stood on its rocker and put her arms around Grandma's neck. Polly often hugged her family. Uncle Jack sometimes called her a "hug-bug."

"Does it hurt very much?" she asked.

"No, darling," said Grandma. "Hardly any so long as I keep quiet."

"I could get supper," coaxed Polly. "I know I could do everything if you tell me."

"Would you like to try?" asked Grandma. "I was going to have baked cauliflower and baked sweet potatoes and tomato salad. I meant to make bran muffins but we'll have to do without those. I made the cheese sauce for the cauliflower before Kerry tripped me. I believe you could finish putting that together, Polly."

Polly was sure she could do everything. First

she put on a gay little pink rubber apron which just fitted her. Polly was very proud of that apron. She washed the sweet potatoes and put them into the oven and then she lighted the pilot-light of the stove and turned on the burners, one after the other. She hoped the gas would not pop.

This time it didn't, but caught cheerfully and promptly as a well-mannered gas-stove should always do.

Then she gave Grandma another hug. "Couldn't I make the muffins?" she begged.

Grandma hesitated a second.

"Uncle Jack loves bran muffins," said Polly.

That settled the matter, as Polly knew it would.

"You could try," said Grandma, and she told Polly just how to make the muffins. Polly brought out the tins and put them on the stove to warm, and then buttered them

with the little pastry brush. Under Grandma's direction she measured the flour and sugar and all the other things that go into muffins. She broke an egg into a cup and beat it with the littlest beater and then she mixed everything together and put the batter into the tins and tucked them into the oven beside the potatoes.

Then she danced about the kitchen. "What next?" she asked Grandma with shining eyes. "I'm sorry Kerry hurt you, but cooking is *such* fun."

"You're a great help to me, Polly," said Grandma and she said that the next thing was to make the tomato salad.

Polly brought the lettuce and the sliced tomatoes from the refrigerator, and the salad plates from the dining-room. She placed the lettuce on the green glass plates and shook up the bottle of French dressing and poured some over the leaves of lettuce. She arranged the

slices of tomato on their green beds and put dabs of mayonnaise over them. She shook red paprika over the yellow dressing.

"That's a very tempting salad," said Grandma. "Now the cauliflower comes next."

Polly skipped into the pantry for a glass baking-dish. She tipped into it the cauliflower which had been cooked earlier in the day. She went to the stove for the cheese sauce. This was keeping hot in a double-boiler.

"Be careful not to burn yourself," said Grandma anxiously.

Polly was very careful indeed. This was the smaller of the two double-boilers, the one Mother called the Lamb. The larger white boiler was the Sheep.

The Lamb behaved like its name and the nice-smelling smooth white sauce went over the

crown of the cauliflower and filled the corners of the dish. Grandma told her to sprinkle bread crumbs quite thickly over the whole.

Another skip into the pantry for the bread crumbs. Polly found them in a glass jar and shook them around with a spoon. Then Grandma got up for the first time. The color was coming back to her face and she did not limp so much.

"I'll put it in the oven," she said. "I'm afraid you will burn yourself doing that."

The oven did seem rather full with the glass dish and the muffin-tins and all the potatoes, and it was also very hot. Polly was relieved that Grandma felt like managing that part.

"What is there for dessert?" she asked.

"Baked apples and cream," said Grandma. "They are ready to go on the sideboard. And a plate of cookies, Polly. My! what a help you are."

"But I love to help," said Polly, hurrying to put the dessert on the sideboard. "What next?"

"It isn't quite time to put on the butterballs or fill the glasses with water. Come and sit on the arm of my chair and tell me what you did at Carola's house."

Polly had been too interested in cooking to think about anything except what she was doing. She sat on the arm of the chair and told Grandma about pouring tea from the darling pot and about riding Silverheels.

"It's nice for Carola to have a pony," she ended.

"Yes, it is," agreed Grandma a little wistfully. "Do you wish you had one?"

"We haven't any good place to keep it," said Polly contentedly. "I have Mittens and Kerry, and Carola lets me ride Silverheels. Carola has only one thing I haven't that I'd

really like, Grandma, and that's Wicky. I *would* like to have a little brother."

"Indeed, I wish you had one," said Grandma.

When Mother and Uncle Jack came, after they were sure Grandma wasn't much hurt, they were certainly astonished to know that Polly mixed those muffins. Grandma said they were every bit as good as hers and Uncle Jack said he didn't believe the President of the United States could make better ones.

This puzzled Polly for a moment. "You mean the Mrs. President?" she asked.

Polly's whole family laughed and Uncle Jack reached over to pinch her cheek.

"I mean the President and his wife and his children and his forefathers even to the fourth generation," he said solemnly.

Polly looked relieved. Uncle Jack was only joking. When it came time for dessert, he an-

nounced that he was going to " buttle," and he put on Polly's pink apron which just about covered his chest. And when he gave Polly her baked apple it wore a fat white marshmallow for a hat.

After supper, neither Grandma nor Polly was permitted to help. Grandma sat in the kitchen rocker, and Polly sat on her lap. Mother washed the dishes and Uncle Jack wiped them, still wearing the pink apron. And they laughed so much that they forgot to be careful, and Uncle Jack broke a saucer.

Grandma said she was not surprised.

Then it was Polly's bedtime and she and Mother went upstairs. Polly didn't need any help about going to bed, but ever since Father hadn't come back from that South American river, Mother and Polly had felt like doing a great deal for each other.

While she was undressing, Polly told Mother

about the pleasant time she had with Carola and how beautiful Grandmother Thorne looked and about the drawing-lesson and what the teacher said.

Mother was pleased. She asked what flower they drew and from which side the light fell upon it, and what part Polly did first. She was interested in everything about the lesson.

Then Polly asked if there would be a picnic the next day, which was Saturday.

"I don't believe so," said Mother. "If it is pleasant, a man is coming to help Uncle Jack pick the apples and put them in the cellar. And I want to dig the gladiolus bulbs from the garden and tidy the flower-beds."

"I'll help dig the bulbs," said Polly.

"Of course you will," Mother answered. "I wouldn't think of doing it without you."

CHAPTER SEVEN

Tells about the Blue John

GREEN apples against a blue sky; red ones sparkling on a background of pretty white clouds; ladders leaning on big branches; Mittens scrambling up one tree and down, only to dash up another, with Kerry wildly barking beside him—Polly thought the orchard a pleasant place that afternoon. Uncle Jack and Mr. Gibson were rapidly filling baskets to be emptied into barrels waiting in the cellar.

Mother looked at those barrels and agreed with Polly that they could not possibly eat all the apples.

"We shall have plenty if we sell six barrels," she said to Grandma.

"It's a good crop," Grandma assented. "Polly will be glad to have no more windfalls to look after."

Polly hadn't thought much about that part of the harvesting. No more apples to pick up meant no more nickels for the little brown dog to take into the bank. A good many had gone in since the apples first began to fall. Polly would have money for her Christmas shopping.

Grandma's wrist and ankle were comfortable this afternoon, but Mother had done most of the extra Saturday work. Now she and Polly came out to dig the gladiolus bulbs.

All through July and August there had been spikes of beautiful flowers. Some were white with dark throats, some were clear yellow, some were pink, and some, and Polly liked these best, were the color of flame.

Mother showed her how to put a trowel into the earth near the bulb but not touching it.

A gentle pressure on the trowel loosened the bulb in the ground so that it came out easily when lifted by its green handle. When Polly pulled up the first one she sat back quite astonished.

"Look, Mother!" she exclaimed. "See all the baby bulbs!"

"Those are the bulblets," said Mother. "Don't shake them off, darling. We will let them dry and another year we will plant all the baby bulbs by themselves."

"Will they have flowers?" asked Polly. How could a spike of blossoms come out of anything so wee?

"Not next summer, but they will grow into much larger bulbs and the flowers will come the summer after next."

"I shall be nearly ten years old, then," said Polly solemnly. Two summers seemed a very long time to wait for flowers.

When the bulbs were all out of the ground, Mother took the garden shears and cut off the leaves five or six inches from each bulb. Then Polly laid them in a long row on the kitchen porch to dry. It was not good for the bulbs to get wet after they were dug.

Mother began to cut dead flower-stalks from the garden. Polly went to see how the apple-pickers were getting on. She came back winking her eyes, for falling apples hurt when they hit a little girl's head.

"Kerry, stop that!" exclaimed Mother. "Oh, Polly, get him out of Grandma's pansies."

Polly ran to pull Kerry away by his collar. "You are a bad dog," she told him. "See what a hole you've made. First you tumbled Grandma down the steps, and now you've dug up her pansies. Naughty Kerry!"

Kerry sat down and put his head on one

side, cocking his ears and looking at her so wisely that Polly laughed.

"You have made me a great deal of work," she said. "I shall have to put back all this dirt. No, you needn't try to help. You help the wrong way."

The hole was really deep, for Mother had not noticed when Kerry began to dig. Polly took the trowel and began to push back the earth. Suddenly the trowel struck something that clinked. Polly supposed it was a stone but when she looked closer she saw it was not an ordinary garden kind of stone at all. It was flat and shaped like a pear and smooth to her touch. In the smaller end was fastened a loop of metal.

"Mother, what's this?" called Polly, dropping the trowel and running over to her mother.

Mrs. Winsor took the stone and looked at it

closely. "Well, of all things!" she exclaimed. "Where did this come from?"

"Kerry dug it out of the pansy bed."

"I believe it is Grandma's blue john she lost so long ago," said Mother.

"Her what?" asked Polly, who had never heard this name.

"Take it to Grandma and she'll tell you. It is something Grandpa gave her when they were first married. When I was a little girl, I remember her losing it and how badly she felt. To think that Kerry has dug it up after all these years!"

Grandma was sitting in a porch-chair which Uncle Jack had brought out for her. It was a long kind of chair with a rest for her ankle.

"Look!" said Polly as she ran up. "See, Grandma, what Kerry dug up for you. Mother thinks it is yours."

Grandma sat up straight when she saw what

Polly brought. "Why, Polly Winsor!" she exclaimed, taking it in her hand. "If it isn't the blue john your Grandpa bought me when we went to England on our wedding-trip!"

Mother had wiped off most of the dirt on the grass and Grandma now dusted the stone with her handkerchief. Polly saw that it was a pendant meant to wear on a chain. The stone was a pretty grayish color with distinct stripes of bluish-purple.

"What a funny name!" she said. "Why is it a blue john, Grandma? What does it mean?"

"It came from a mine in central England called the Blue John mine. This stone is fluor-spar and it is found in quantities close to lead, the mineral they use in making water-pipes."

Yes, Polly knew. In the kitchen of Three Gates the cold water came through a dull-colored lead pipe, while the hot water ran from

one of shining brass. But she hadn't known that lead was dug from the earth.

"The lead is used for other things than pipes," explained Grandma, "and so is the fluor-spar used for other things than pendants. But at this place, the prettiest fluor-spar came from the Blue John mine and it was often made into jewelry and vases and ornaments. I remember that the mine had thirteen shafts and that the fluor-spar taken from each shaft was a different stripe. Look, Polly."

Grandma held the blue john so it was between the sun and Polly. The stripes in the stone looked dark, grayish-brown on a lighter background. Then she held it so that the sunlight fell from behind Polly, and the background stayed the same, but the stripes changed to a blue-purple.

"Did you go down in the mine?" asked Polly.

"Not in the Blue John. We went into one of the lead mines. That especial mine was no longer worked because an underground river had flooded the shaft. A guide took Grandpa and me down a long stair, over a hundred steps, right down into the earth. We came to a platform beside which a boat was floating on some inky-black water. We got into the boat and the guide told us to be careful not to put our fingers over the edge because the passage where we were going was just wide enough for the boat."

"Was it dark?" asked Polly, with her gray eyes big and wide.

"Very dark," said Grandma. "As we moved along, the guide stuck lighted candles on ledges in the sides of the passage. We could see them reflected in the black water and we could see the veins of lead in the rock walls of the tunnel."

"I don't think I should have liked it," said Polly. "I don't believe I want to go on that kind of a river."

"I was glad Grandpa was with me, for it was strange and rather frightening," Grandma admitted. "As the guide pushed the boat along, we could hear a roaring sound which grew louder and louder. Finally the underground river broadened and became a lake in a cave. The roof was far above our heads, all black and glistening, and the roaring was very loud. A big chain stretched across from one wall of the cavern to the other, to keep the boat from going any farther. And the roar was the noise the river made pouring down the shaft of the old mine."

"If the chain hadn't been there, would the boat have gone down the hole with you and Grandpa?"

"Probably," said Grandma. "I thought of

that, Polly, and I was glad the chain was there and I hoped it would not break."

"And did it?" asked Polly anxiously.

"No," said Grandma. "It was a strong chain. But I was pleased when we were safe above ground. Grandpa bought me the blue john for a remembrance. I must have lost it at least fifteen years ago. I was gardening at the time, and though I looked and looked, I couldn't find it. To think that little Kerry dug it out of the pansy bed!"

"He did it because he was sorry he made you fall yesterday," said Polly. "Didn't you, Kerry?"

Kerry whined and laid his head on Grandma's knee. Then he sat down before her and rapidly offered her first one front paw and then the other, as though to tell her he found the blue john on purpose to make up for hurting her.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Tells about the Rainy-Day Drawer

MY, how hard it rained! Showers came down that morning, not at all like gentle sprinklings from kindly-feeling clouds, but in solid sheets of water. Polly, with her nose pressed against the pane of the sitting-room window, really couldn't see the houses across the street, only a white mist of rain.

Grandma was troubled because it was so wet for Mother and Uncle Jack to start for town. *They* didn't mind at all.

"What is Justin for?" asked Uncle Jack, and he got out the car. He would park it by the station and there it would stay, ready to bring them home at night.

"Suppose somebody steals it," said Grandma. "That isn't a very safe place to leave a car."

"He will be welcome," replied Uncle Jack. "Nobody in his senses would steal Just-tin. Who does, must indeed be hard up."

Mother put on her rubbers and her slicker. She kissed Polly and Grandma and skipped into Justin. Uncle Jack switched on the lights and Polly saw the little red one at the back glowing for an instant after the car itself vanished into the storm.

"Do you think there will be school, Grandma?" she asked.

"No," said Grandma, "I don't. I think the bell will ring, but whether it does or not, Polly, I don't want you to go out in weather like this."

"I don't want to be absent," said Polly. "Our room has the banner this week for the

best record about being late or absent. Can't I go if the bell doesn't ring?"

"We'll see how hard it rains," said Grandma.

Polly looked anxiously at the clock. A signal might sound at eight. That meant no school for all grades below the high school. Or it might ring at half-past eight, which meant that everybody was expected to come except the little children of the first three grades. The clock hands stood at a quarter to eight.

Polly put on her pink apron and cleared the table for Grandma. The rain beat against the window by the breakfast-nook, and streams ran down the glass and the screen. Grandma opened the door to the cellar stairs.

"Oh, Polly, quick! Shut the door to the dining-room. Mittens has a mouse!"

Polly caught one glimpse of Mittens, charg-

ing up the cellar stairs, his ears laid straight back, and a long gray tail dangling from one corner of his mouth. She shut the door rapidly, and shut herself on the dining-room side. Polly loved Mittens and she knew mice were destructive, but all the same she didn't like her kitty to catch them.

Grandma was praising Mittens and coaxing him into the shed. Polly stayed where she was until she heard the shed door click. Then she went back into the kitchen.

"I suppose it is good of Mittens to catch mice, but I wish he would not be so disagreeable about their tails," she said to Grandma.

"To see one dripping from the corner of Mittens' mouth does give me a queer feeling," Grandma admitted.

"Perhaps the tail would choke him if it got down his throat," said Polly thoughtfully. "Oh, Grandma, there's the no-school signal!"

Sure enough, close upon the stroke of eight by the grandfather clock in the front hall, came the sound of the fire-alarm. Polly and Grandma both counted it. Three-three-three. No school for anybody but the big boys and girls of the high school.

"Goody!" sang Polly. "No school! No school!" and she danced about the kitchen and gave Grandma a hug.

"Why, I thought you liked to go to school!" laughed Grandma.

"I do," Polly admitted, "but I like stormy days at home. It's been pleasant for a long time now and I haven't had a chance to play with the rainy-day drawer. I think it's nice to have special things for rainy days, don't you, Grandma?"

Grandma agreed. She said she had been saving things to do the next time it rained.

After she had wiped and put away the

pretty yellow breakfast dishes, Polly lingered a little to see if Grandma's rainy-day plans promised any interest. She didn't think they did. It looked as though Grandma meant only to clean the kitchen closet.

Polly called Kerry in from the porch, and Mittens, now without the mouse-tail, from the shed, and they all went into the sitting-room.

On one side stood a tall old-fashioned bookcase, and its base held a long drawer. This was Polly's rainy-day drawer, and she never played with its contents except during a storm.

Polly sat down flat on the floor before the bookcase. Kerry stood beside her, wagging his short tail. Kerry hoped that something of interest and value to a little dog would emerge from that drawer. Mittens sat on the rug, industriously washing his face, a face that wore a smug and virtuous expression, for Mittens was very well pleased with himself.

Polly opened the drawer and considered what plaything to choose.

There was a box of plastic clay. Polly looked at it and then at Mittens. The last time she used that clay, she tried to mould a cat. Uncle Jack said it looked like one which had misspent all its nine lives.

There was a box of water-color paints. Polly decided that she did not care to paint.

There was a box of paper dolls, some colored paper, and a pair of blunt-pointed scissors. Polly looked into this box and closed it again. Paper dolls were much more fun when one had a playmate.

Kerry saw something he wanted and he promptly took it. Polly let him, for it was a piece of red rubber shaped like a bone. One of Uncle Jack's friends gave it to Kerry. Polly didn't know how it got into her rainy-day drawer, but of course Kerry had a right

KERRY SAW SOMETHING HE WANTED. *Page 102.*

to his own rubber bone. He lay down at once, chewing it contentedly.

For three minutes longer, Polly sat gazing into the drawer and then she decided what to play. From the farther corner she took a box and a little roll of canvas and sticks.

The box contained fifteen little china dogs and five tiny china rabbits. There were three families of dogs; Mrs. Spitz and the four Spitz puppies; Mrs. Pug and the four Pug puppies; Mrs. Mastiff and the four Mastiff puppies. Mrs. Spitz and her family were white and shaggy with plumy tails and blue eyes and stand-up ears; the Pugs were yellowish-tan with black markings and tightly curled tails; the Mastiff family were darker brown and stout with straight tails and loppy ears. Mrs. Bun and her family were ordinary white rabbits with pink eyes.

Once Polly had seen a live spitz dog, but

never a pug nor a mastiff. Grandma said she didn't believe there were pug dogs now, but at the time she married Grandpa they were fashionable for pets.

All these china animals had belonged to Grandma when she was a little girl, and they used to stand on the sitting-room mantel in front of the clock. Grandma told Polly how long it took her to dust that mantel when so many little figures had to be moved and arranged again. Once there had been a fox family as well, and one of deer, but none were left.

Two of the Buns were invalids with broken ears and paws, and one spitz puppy had lost a leg.

Polly took all the little animals from their box and set them on the floor. "You have been here long enough," she said. "Now, you are going on a journey."

To the front of the pasteboard box cover were fastened five strings with looped ends. To the cover Polly harnessed the entire Mastiff family, as the Eskimos harness their dogs.

"Your family ought to pull the sledge because you look more like the Arctic dogs," she said to Mrs. Spitz, "but Grandma says Mrs. Mastiff is bigger and stronger, so she and her puppies must do it. But only one family besides the Buns can ride. You and the Pugs must take turns walking."

Mrs. Spitz had nothing to say. She and her family took their places beside the sledge.

The road lay along the edge of the rug, and a certain figure repeated in the border at regular intervals, marked a progress of five miles. To travel that distance took a considerable number of actual minutes, because the dogs in leash had to be drawn gently so as not to upset them or their passengers. Then the

Spitz family were extremely slow walkers, only one dog moving at a time. At the half-way point, Mrs. Pug and her puppies must take their turn walking. Considerable planning was needed.

Polly gave a sigh of relief when the caravan finally reached the five-mile spot. "It is evening," she said, "and time to camp. But we have forgotten the tent!"

Back at the starting-point lay the tent and poles!

"Mrs. Spitz, you must go back for it," announced Polly. "You are bigger than Mrs. Pug. Mrs. Bun is too sick to walk so far, and Mrs. Mastiff has pulled the sledge all the way. She is tired."

Mrs. Spitz went back willingly and silently and returned with the tent. Polly set it up, a cone around a central pole, with a flap for a door. First, the invalid Buns were tucked

into bed, and then, each family of dogs.

"Now, it is black night," said Polly. "There is no moon and there are no stars. Bats are flitting. Everybody is asleep. It is growing very late. It is midnight. Now it is getting early. It is earlier still. A rooster is crowing. The clouds are pink. The sun is rising. Mrs. Pug is awake."

Being awake, Mrs. Pug had to get up at once and was directed to cook breakfast for the entire camp. In the excitement over the forgotten tent, it seemed that nobody thought to build a camp-fire nor to prepare supper. All were extremely hungry.

While Mrs. Pug was getting breakfast, Mrs. Spitz set the table with round bits of paper, the size of a dime, for plates. Table and plates apparently dropped from the sky for the use of the travelers, for they certainly hadn't arrived with the camp baggage.

After breakfast the animal caravan struck its camp for another day's march. During the morning they passed a large lake where everybody, even the invalid Buns, went bathing. That afternoon a terrible misfortune overtook them.

They were hardly a mile on their way from the lake when, without a second's warning, a hostile band of Indians swept down upon them, overturning the entire Spitz family, shaking the Buns from the sledge, and departing with Mrs. Pug a shrieking captive.

Polly jumped up. "Kerry, you bad, bad dog! Don't bite her in two. Chew your bone and give Mrs. Pug to me! Let me have her this instant!"

Then she looked at the window. The rain had stopped, the sun was showing through the clouds and there was a wee bit of blue sky.

That afternoon there would be school.

CHAPTER NINE

Tells about the Doll-House

ON the third floor of Polly's home was the room which she thought the most interesting one in the house. She liked it better than the clean sunny kitchen with the pleasant breakfast-nook; better even than the sitting-room with its cheery open fire and shabby rugs and cases of books and its dark old furniture reflecting pools of light.

Half the attic room belonged to Mother and half to Uncle Jack. Just about on the division line stood a big stove, for the steam heat didn't come up to warm the attic. This stove was not at all pretty, being tall and round, but it gave out a great deal of heat, so that it did its full duty in the world. Near the stove were

some old chairs for Grandma or for Polly or for anybody who might come up to the workroom.

The northern half of the attic belonged to Uncle Jack, and before the windows on his side stood two long narrow tables made of planks resting on high trestles. The top of one was covered with heavy thick cardboard so that it was perfectly level and smooth. On this, Uncle Jack spread lengths of thin drawing-paper, fastened down by thumb-tacks. The paper came in big rolls. It was called "architects' paper," and crackled when it was unrolled.

There was a high stool on which Uncle Jack sometimes sat, but usually he preferred to stand while drawing, and he kept his tools spread out on the second table behind him. These tools were interesting. There were different kinds of rulers, and compasses to draw

circles, and queer-shaped transparent things that helped one make any kind of an angle or curved line. Sometimes Uncle Jack let Polly take the curved guide and one of his odd, flat pencils and draw figures on a piece of the crackly paper. Polly once tried to count the pencils and pieces of chalk on Uncle Jack's table, but when she got up to thirty-seven, she stopped. Screwed to the window frame was a pencil-sharpener in which Polly put points on the round pencils. Uncle Jack did the flat ones with his knife.

There was a case with pigeonholes and a great many rolled blue-prints sticking out. Pinned all around on the walls were sketches of doorways, and charcoal drawings, and even illustrations torn from magazines.

Mother's things were over by the south windows, and Polly thought them even more interesting than Uncle Jack's. Grandma said

they were certainly more messy. Mother had a table and a bench and an old desk stuffed full of papers, and a great many pots of paint and dye and turpentine sitting on rough shelves. Her part of the attic held a sink with running water and she had more tools than Uncle Jack. Some she used for cutting things out of brass and copper, and some she used for making rings and jewelry, and others when she drew designs for lamp-shades or things made from cloth. Mother sometimes borrowed Uncle Jack's guides for curves and angles. There was also a gas-plate so that she could heat her dyes.

Altogether, Polly thought the workroom a most interesting place, and so it was for anybody who likes to do things with her fingers. Polly knew that she must not touch anything without asking first, because if she did, she might spoil some pretty thing that was not

finished. Usually, she was very careful about obeying.

Not long after the day there was no school, Carola came home with Polly to stay till five. That week, Jack Frost had visited Longfield and behaved so badly that the trees blushed to see his antics. All the way up Spring Street the children walked in the fallen red and yellow leaves, enjoying their rustle. When they passed the Emerson house, Harry was raking more leaves on the fire he had kindled in the gutter. The smoky smell made one think of sunsets and frosty nights.

Before Polly's house stood two maple-trees. Their names were Robin Hood and Will Scarlet. To his topmost twig Will was gorgeous in flaming red, but Robin Hood stood like his namesake, in Lincoln green.

" He always stays green," Polly told Carola. " Sometimes his leaves have little bits of red

spots or red edges, but that's all. Uncle Jack says Will Scarlet puts out the sunrise."

For a while, the little girls played with Kerry in the orchard and then they went into the house. It was growing chilly outside.

Grandma was glad to see Carola. She gave them each a cooky, and then they went into the sitting-room to play with Polly's doll-house.

Uncle Jack had given it to her last Christmas. He and Mother had made every inch of it, and outside, it was Three Gates in miniature, painted white, and with Robin Hood in green and Will Scarlet in royal red before it. The fence had three gates, and one was shut and one half-open and the other wide-open, just as the real ones usually stood.

Inside, it wasn't the same, but Polly didn't mind. And if the back of any house were swung open, it would look different. There were a kitchen and a dining-room and a sitting-

room, and upstairs were three bedrooms and a bathroom.

The four-poster beds were made from match-boxes and the tiny bureaus and chairs and tables from pasteboard and thin wood. One bedroom set was painted yellow, one pink, and the other blue.

The dining-room was especially attractive for all its furniture was cut from sheet tin, bent into shape and painted a lovely shade of green. The wee electric-light fixtures were made of fine wire coated with green sealing-wax and had glass beads for shades.

In the kitchen was a shiny black stove which Mother had also cut from tin. Here, the walls were painted yellow and the chairs were a deeper yellow, trimmed with black. On the shelves were little yellow and white jars and crocks.

Some of the house-fittings were made of

modeling clay, and some of putty, and some of sealing-wax. Curtains of silk to match the different rooms draped the downstairs windows and white muslin the upstairs ones. Rugs of proper sizes and materials covered the varnished floors, washable ones for bedrooms and bathroom, and nicer ones for the dining-room and living-room.

Mother and Uncle Jack had almost more fun making and furnishing that doll-house than Polly had in playing with it. It cost hardly anything except the love and time put into it, but it was so pretty and artistic that it interested even the grown-up people who saw it.

All the furniture fitted dolls an inch high, and far too many dolls of this size lived in Polly's playhouse. When such a number of real people crowd into one house, the Board of Health says some of them must move out.

Polly and Carola took out of the house the twenty-three dolls who lived in it. You can see how shockingly they were crowded when only six could go properly to bed.

First they changed the dresses of all the dolls, which was easy, for all the frocks were cut alike, a little circle of cloth with holes for head and arms. Bits of embroidery silk served as sashes. Only ladies lived in Polly's house, and they were quite up-to-date and didn't wear many undergarments. It was not much of a tax to keep them clothed.

After the dolls were dressed, they had a party.

"They can't all eat at once," said Polly. "Only six can sit at the table."

"This is a different kind of party," said Carola, "not a sitting-down party but one like Mother gave last week. A standing-up kind, with tea and cakes and candy on the table, and

everybody walking around and talking and holding their cups."

"Oh, yes," said Polly. "Grandma went to that. Did you?"

"No," said Carola. "I had some of the cakes afterwards. I stayed out with Wicky and Nanna. Susan was in it. She showed people where to put their wraps and then helped pass the tea. She said it was deadly dull."

"Grandma had a nice time," said Polly. "Susan is funny."

"Dutee says she's a poor fish," observed Carola cheerfully. "So Susan said he was a dumb-bell, and Mother said not to talk any more. So they didn't—not till she left the room. See, these are the visiting ladies, and they must go and speak to the one who is giving the party. She's this one in pink silk. And two must sit at the table to pour the tea

and the coffee. This can be Susan and tell them to take their wraps upstairs."

The ladies drank many cups of tea, so the party was a success. And then the little girls tired of playing.

" Is your mother making anything pretty? " asked Carola.

" Yes," said Polly, " a chiffon scarf for Aunt Barbara's birthday. She was putting wax on it last night."

" Wax on a scarf? Did she spoil it? " asked Carola.

" She meant to put it on. Come up to the workroom and I'll show you."

They left the doll-house and ran up to the attic. On a line stretched between two nails hung a white chiffon scarf, and, as Polly said, it was stiff with paraffin wax. Only a border three inches wide was still soft and filmy.

" I don't think it will be pretty," said Carola doubtfully.

" Yes, it will," declared Polly confidently. " She made one for Grandma just this way, and when it was all stiff with wax, Mother kept pinching it up with her fingers and breaking the wax all over the scarf. Uncle Jack asked her if she 'spected it to look like anything at all. And Mother said she did. And when she had cracked it all up she dipped it in a dye-pot and then she hung it up to dry again. When it was dry she ironed it and ironed it between pieces of paper. She used 'most all the brown paper in the house, because newspaper wouldn't do. And when she stopped, the wax was all gone, and the scarf was soft and white again with silver cobwebs all over it. Grandma wore it to your mother's tea."

" Susan saw it," said Carola. " She said she wished she had a pink one like it."

"This one is to be pink," said Polly. "Aunt Barbara likes pink things best."

Carola wandered over to Uncle Jack's table. A long strip of paper was pinned down upon it, with an outline showing the floor plan of a house. This did not interest the children. They returned to Mrs. Winsor's side of the room.

"What is this?" asked Carola peeping into a white crockery dish on the far side of the table. In it lay a flat piece of metal, heavily coated with a brownish stuff. Where the metal wasn't brown it was green in a sort of design. The dish looked partly full of water.

"I don't know," said Polly. "I didn't see that before."

Polly knew she ought not to touch anything in the workroom, but what harm could she do by giving that bit of metal a gentle poke with her finger? Surely, that wasn't meddling.

Polly poked her finger into the dish and jerked it out again in almost the same motion. She wiped the finger on the front of her dress, the pretty yellow gingham she liked so much. And where she touched the dress, the yellow cloth turned very dark. The tip of her finger also turned dark and began to feel queer. Polly looked at the queer stain on her dress and she looked at Carola and at her finger and began to cry. Then she ran to find Grandma.

Carola didn't know what had happened, but she, too, was frightened. She ran after Polly.

A little later, Polly, her finger bandaged and the smart subsiding, sat on Grandma's lap and told her just what she did in the workroom. It was five o'clock, and Carola, happier since she knew that Polly wasn't much hurt, had gone home.

"I didn't mean to meddle," ended Polly. "I thought it was water in that dish."

"You should never touch anything at all on Mother's table. Suppose you had upset that dish! Both you and Carola might have been burned by the acid in it. It was strong enough to eat a pattern into the metal Mother left in it. That is why she covered with varnish the part she did not want etched."

"I'll never, never touch anything again," promised Polly.

"I don't think you will," said Grandma. "And though I'm sorry you spoiled your pretty dress, your finger would burn much worse if you hadn't wiped it off so quickly. I'm *so* thankful you didn't put it in your mouth or eyes, Polly."

"Must we tell Mother?" Polly asked, her head on Grandma's shoulder and her arms around her neck.

"I think we had better tell her," said Grandma gently.

CHAPTER TEN

Tells How Fair Rosamond Went Away

POLLY'S finger didn't stay sore very long, but the yellow stain remained for some time. She told Mother all about her meddling. Mother was sorry that Polly forgot about touching things but glad that nothing worse happened. She thought Polly would surely remember not to interfere again. She also thought she had been careless herself in leaving so dangerous an acid sitting around like so much harmless water.

Mother put a pocket over the stain on Polly's dress. It was a most interesting pocket, in the shape of a rabbit's head with long ears. All the children thought it the nicest pocket ever seen, and Polly liked the dress even better than before the accident.

Besides the little dolls which lived in the playhouse, Polly had three other children. One was a small boy doll named Jacob; one was a baby in long clothes, called Moses; and the third was Fair Rosamond.

Fair Rosamond was Polly's favorite child. Her face was like that of a real little girl and she could not be broken, which was a great comfort to her mother. Doll-children have such terrible falls that it is a wonder any of them live till their mothers grow up.

Polly loved Fair Rosamond dearly. She was put to sleep every night in her little bed close beside Polly's own. That doll's bed had belonged to Mother when she was a little girl. It had pillows with cases, and real sheets and blankets, and a bedspread which Grandma crocheted.

One afternoon in October, Carola was again at Polly's house, and a third little girl named

Dotty Appleton was playing with them. Carola brought her doll to visit Fair Rosamond and Dotty brought hers.

They planned to play out of doors for a time and then go into the house. Fair Rosamond and her two guests, whose names were Calamity Jane and Elinor, sat in a row on a comfortable seat of dried leaves and watched their mothers play hide-and-seek. Kerry was playing, too, after his own ideas.

The children did not think him very helpful, because when either Carola or Dotty was " it," Kerry would run, prancing and yelping, straight to where Polly was hiding. But he would *not* help Polly find the other two. He was so unfair about it that Carola and Dotty agreed that finding Polly need count only one out of every three times.

After a time, Dotty fell and bumped her nose so that it began to bleed. Polly took her

at once into the house to find Grandma, and Carola followed. By the time Dotty's nose stopped bleeding and her face was washed, it was nearly sunset, and time for visiting little girls to go home.

All this while Fair Rosamond had been left to entertain her guests out of doors. Polly was sorry Fair Rosamond had been so thoughtless, but it was rather late in the day to mend matters. Elinor and Calamity Jane had to go home, each with her own mother. Polly went out with them. She intended to put Rosamond directly into bed because she had been so rude to her callers.

Elinor and Calamity Jane were still sitting on the couch of leaves but Fair Rosamond was gone.

Polly couldn't believe her eyes. Though twilight was falling, the two visitors were perfectly visible, though they had moved farther

apart. Calamity Jane had even turned her back impolitely upon Elinor.

Carola and Dotty helped Polly search. They paid no attention to Mittens, who had come out for his usual evening game with the swallows. Mittens lay flat on his back in the drive while the swallows swooped above him, and he tried to bat them with his front paws. Back and forth skimmed the birds, so close that they seemed to touch the little furry feet, but Mittens never hit them and probably the swallows did not mean that he should. Nearly every pleasant evening at sunset Mittens came out for his frolic and, though there wasn't a swallow in sight when he lay down in the drive, they at once appeared. The game ended when Mittens rolled over on his feet. Then the swallows went away.

Carola and Dotty hunted for Fair Rosamond until it grew so late that Grandma was

worried about their getting home before dark. *That* part was all right because Mrs. Thorne sent Dutee after Carola, and though Dutee was rather cross because of coming, he told Grandma that he would see Dotty safely home. Neither did he think that Fair Rosamond was any excuse for Carola not to start for home at five.

"You can make your excuses to Mother, Miss," he growled.

Carola meant to do so. She was sure Mother would understand how Polly grieved over her child's disappearance.

Polly hunted till she couldn't see anything distinctly, partly because it was so dark and partly because the tears would keep coming into her eyes.

"Do you think Mother will look for her when she comes?" she asked Grandma, who finally called her in.

" I am sure she will," said Grandma. " She will take the lantern from the shed and look all around. But even if you don't find her till morning, Fair Rosamond won't be hurt by staying out. The stars are bright and it isn't going to rain."

" She never slept outside of her bed before," said Polly tearfully.

" Then think what a great adventure it will be for her to camp out overnight," comforted Grandma. " Where's Kerry? "

Polly went to the door to call him. Kerry rushed in, carrying a small brown door-mat, which didn't belong to Three Gates.

" Dear me! " said Grandma, looking at it in dismay. " What a naughty puppy! Where do you suppose he got that mat? "

Polly didn't know. Kerry might have brought it from simply anywhere.

" After supper I shall have to telephone all

around the neighborhood and try to find out," said Grandma resignedly. "Hurry with the table, Polly dear. It's getting late."

Polly set the table, but she dragged one foot after the other in a way quite unlike her usual happy self. Every time she thought of Fair Rosamond a big choke came in her throat.

After supper Mother lighted the lantern and Polly put on her coat and they looked all over the orchard where the little girls had been playing. Not a trace of Fair Rosamond could be found.

"What *do* you think has happened?" Polly asked. Her throat was very choky now and it was hard not to cry.

"I don't know," said Mother, "unless ——"

She did not finish her sentence but stood looking at the little brown door-mat which Kerry had presented to his family.

"Do you suppose, Polly," she asked at last,

" that bad little Kerry took Fair Rosamond off and exchanged her for this mat? "

" I think it's *just* what he did," answered Polly, overcome by the thought and bursting into tears. " He's a mean, mean dog, and I sha'n't love him any more! "

" I'm afraid he did take her," said Mother, " but he doesn't know any better. Fair Rosamond may come home. Don't you remember, Polly, when we taught you the street, and house number so you would know where you lived if you should be lost, you asked me to write Rosamond's name and address on a paper for you to put in the pocket of her dress? Is it still there? "

" Yes, Mother, it is! " said Polly, cheering up. " I know it's there because I put it back last time Grandma washed her dress. Mother, do you think she will come home? "

" I shouldn't be surprised to see her trotting

in to-morrow morning," said Mother, and Polly managed an answering smile.

But Fair Rosamond did not come home in the morning. Grandma telephoned to several neighbors to ask if any one had received Polly's child in exchange for a door-mat. Nobody had missed the mat and nobody had seen Fair Rosamond.

On the whole, Polly was brave, and she slapped Kerry only once, in a moment when she was missing Fair Rosamond dreadfully and he was teasing her to play. As soon as she did it, she was sorry, for after all, she didn't *know* that Kerry kidnapped her child.

Uncle Jack had no doubts whatever on the subject. He told Kerry he was no longer an angel puppy but a bad black-hearted burglar, and he told Polly he would bring her another doll as nearly like Fair Rosamond as he could find in the city of Boston.

Polly hugged him and said she'd rather not have anybody in Fair Rosamond's place.

Uncle Jack was troubled by this answer. When Polly was asleep he asked his sister what he had better do.

"Let's just wait," said Polly's mother. "Perhaps Fair Rosamond will yet come home. Perhaps, after a while, Polly will feel like loving her twin sister."

The brown mat hung on a nail in the woodshed. Nobody could discover to whom it belonged.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Tells about the Street Fair

CAROLA told Polly that there was to be a street fair in Longfield. She and Polly were walking home from church school when Susan came up behind them. Susan was helping with the youngest children in the church school that fall, and she liked doing so better than she liked many things. Mrs. Thorne told Polly's grandmother that she was really discouraged about Susan, because there was almost nothing Susan wanted to do. But Susan liked the littlest children and the children liked her.

Polly also, was fond of her. Susan and Dutee were often extremely impolite to each other, not to say quarrelsome, but Susan al-

ways petted her little sister, and often included Polly when doing things for Carola.

Susan was tall and slender and very pretty. Uncle Jack said that Susan Thorne was the prettiest young girl in Longfield, but he was willing to wager ten cents that at sixteen, Grandmother Thorne had been even prettier. Nobody was living who had known Grandmother Thorne at that age, so nobody contradicted Uncle Jack.

"I don't know what a street fair is," Polly was saying when Susan overtook them.

"It's to raise money for the town hospital," Susan explained. "It's just like a church fair, Polly, only it will be along a street. They are going to take Spring Street, where you live, and rope it off so no cars can go through, and charge ten cents for admission. There will be things to sell in the different houses and on the lawns."

"My street!" exclaimed Polly. "What's going to be in my house?"

"I don't know," said Susan. "But I'm to manage the balloons, and you and Carola can help sell them. The street will be spick and spandy clean so people can dance on the asphalt. There's to be a hurdy-gurdy for music."

"I don't like that kind of music," said Polly.

"Neither do I," said Susan, "but it's fashionable. Last month I went to a wedding where they had a hurdy-gurdy."

"Right in the church?" shrieked the shocked Carola.

"No, goosey, at the reception, for dancing on the lawn."

"When's it to be—the street fair, I mean?" Polly asked.

"Next Saturday," replied Susan.

Polly gave a little skip of satisfaction. She thought all the nicest things happened on Saturdays. That was partly because it was a day when Mother was at home to help them happen.

"What's Dutee going to do?" Carola asked.

"Look after Silverheels," said her sister.

"Why, is Silverheels going to the street fair?" Polly asked in astonishment.

"Yes," answered Susan. "Harnessed to his cart to take children to ride. Ten cents a ride will bring in a lot of dimes for the hospital. I only hope Dutee tends to his job. I shall be too busy with the balloons to keep after him."

When she reached home, Polly found that Grandma and Mother knew all about the street fair. They told her what part her house was to take.

On the front lawn of Three Gates a cabbage

garden would grow, each paper cabbage concealing in its heart a grab. At the front gate some one would stand to collect the nickels. The grab-seekers would pay at that gate, file in, pluck each a cabbage, and leave by the side gate.

Grandma said that she expected to see about the lawn a great quantity of green and purple paper, and that the ladies who were planning the grabs did not realize how much work it would be to make two hundred crêpe-paper cabbages.

On the kitchen porch of Three Gates there was planned a cat show. People would pay five cents at the back gate to go in and see the cats.

This troubled Polly till she knew that the visiting cats would come in boxes with wire fronts. No cats would be loose to fight with Mittens.

She wondered how he would like the affair and Mother suggested that Mittens be a part of the show.

"He won't like so many people around," she said. "Don't you think he will be just as happy if he is in a box for the afternoon?"

Polly thought it over and decided that Mittens would be happier, and safer, too, for he would not understand having strangers about his home. He loved to lie in boxes and would probably curl up and sleep.

That disposed of Mittens. Uncle Jack said he would see about the box. He also said that on the Saturday of the street fair, he should take Kerry to a friend living in another part of town. Three Gates and the fair could dispense with Kerry's society. Things would surely go more smoothly without him.

As the week passed, all the Spring Street people worked hard to get ready for the fair.

Others from all over town kept coming, to plan where the candy should be sold and where was the best place for the popcorn and the peanuts and the cake.

Of course everything depended on the weather. Every one hoped for a pleasant day, and when Saturday dawned not only sunny, but warm, it seemed as though October itself were interested in the Longfield hospital and wanted the fair to be a success.

Very early the street was astir. First came the town workmen. They swept that street by inches, and then came the fire engine and pumped water all over the asphalt. Nobody had ever seen it so clean before. The workmen set barriers at each end so that nothing could drive in and soil the street before the fair began.

This happened before Polly was dressed, and during breakfast she kept popping up to

see the men who came to arrange outdoor tables and to string wires along the trees for colored lights in the evening. Interesting things happened every moment. Polly's friends all envied her because she was living right in the middle of the street fair.

When four young ladies began to plant cabbages on the front lawn of Three Gates, Polly almost burst with excitement. Each paper cabbage was tied to a slender sharp stick stuck into the turf. Never did a regular vegetable garden boast such even rows.

Mother's share had been to make the pretty posters telling people about the fair. She made them early in the week, and Polly had seen them in the shop-windows and tacked on the bulletin-board before the Town Hall.

Grandma's clever fingers made a great many cunning white rolls for the supper to be served in the garden of the Freeman house. Polly

secretly hoped that a few would be left over for the family.

No cats were expected till about two o'clock, the hour when the fair was to open. Polly wondered how Susan and the balloons were getting on.

"May I go and see about the balloons?" she asked Mother.

"After lunch," said Mother. "Come and eat now, Polly. It's early, but we want to get through."

Interesting things were to be seen from the breakfast-nook where they lunched; a tent going up in the Sanborn yard for a fortune-teller, the front of the Roberts house being strung with tiny flags of all nations, and the wide porch set with tables for afternoon tea.

When Polly reached the Thorne place, she found Carola and Dutee and Susan and Nanna and Wicky and Frank, the chauffeur, all

clustered just inside the garage door. From that door came a hissing, piercing noise.

It was the kind of noise that makes you stop your ears with your fingers. Wicky and Carola were doing it, and Polly stopped hers at once, for she did want to see what was going on in that garage. Before the door, Beware-the-dog was prancing crazily, uttering agonized yelps. He was almost tying himself into bow-knots in his excitement.

Inside, Susan and Dutee both appeared to be talking, though nobody could hear one word they said. Frank, with a resigned expression on his face, held the nozzle of a rubber tube attached to a big cylinder and was filling the balloons with gas.

Polly's fascinated eyes watched him take a limp wrinkled bit of blue or red or yellow rubber and slip it on the nozzle of the pipe, which at once blew it into a wonderful big

colored bubble. Frank twisted its neck and handed it to Nanna. She slipped an elastic band over the neck to keep it tight. Susan then took the balloon and tied on a long cord. Dutee was grouping the finished balloons in bunches, which bobbed about his head and about the roof of the garage in an absorbing riot of colored globes.

Every now and then some balloon had a spot of thinner rubber or Frank filled it too full. Then an explosion was added to the hissing and only a torn fragment of colored rubber remained of the shining globe. It had vanished like a soap-bubble.

Susan rushed out with a bunch of balloons bobbing above her head like many-colored grapes. She shoved them into the big limousine standing outside the garage. It was already nearly full of inflated balloons.

" You don't *need* to stand here and listen to

that noise!" she shrieked to Carola and Polly and Wicky.

Of course they didn't need to, but who could leave so fascinating a spot?

At last came a lull, for the car would hold no more balloons. Frank shut off the gas with a sigh of relief and came out to drive the car down the back way to the Richards house, where the balloons were being anchored to trees. Nurse grabbed Beware-the-dog by the collar, Susan and Dutee crowded into the front seat with Frank, and the limousine full of gay balloons swung down the drive. To-day the Thorne car was having small chance to rest its wheels. A great peace fell upon the garage. Even Beware-the-dog ceased yelping and lay down, exhausted and panting.

"That's the third load," said Carola, unstopping her ears in relief. "How many more are there to blow up, Nanna?"

"About fifty," the nurse replied. "I shall certainly be glad when they are done."

"So shall I," said Wicky, so solemnly that Carola and Polly both hugged him, and Beware-the-dog jumped up and licked his face.

"Susan's 'most had a fit," said Carola. "Frank had to drive to three towns before he could get the right kind of gas. And it's a lot of work to blow up three hundred balloons."

"My, what a many!" said Polly, and then she said she must go home. Mittens was yet to be found and put in his box for exhibition.

Carola was worrying about Silverheels. She thought he should be harnessed and in attendance at the fair. Eight or ten children might already be waiting for a drive.

"It isn't necessary for Silverheels to be there exactly at two," said Nanna. "Dutee will see to him as soon as the balloons are out of the way."

When Polly reached home three cats had arrived for the show, each in a comfortable box. The boxes bore cards with the names of the owners.

"Mittens has eaten his dinner and gone upstairs for a nap," said Mother. "His box is ready, if you'll bring him, Polly."

Polly found the dear pussy asleep on the foot of Mother's bed. He purred all the time she was carrying him down and while he was being put in his box, to which Mother had fastened a card.

"MITTENS"
"Entered by Pauline Winsor."

When on the porch, Mittens paid no attention to the other cats. He liked his box and he was sleepy so he curled up for another nap.

Even balloons were forgotten when two men dressed in Scotch kilts began to parade the

street, stepping pridefully in time to the bagpipes they played. Such queer-looking affairs to be musical instruments!

All the rest of the afternoon so many and such interesting things constantly happened that Polly felt confused. And she didn't know so many people *lived* in Longfield as came to that street fair.

One by one the red and yellow and green and blue balloons floated away above the heads of happy children. One by one the two hundred cabbages on the lawn of Three Gates disappeared in the hands of grab-seekers. Grandma admitted that the matter of discarded paper was better than she feared. Cunning little Silverheels trotted up and down the street a dozen times an hour, his basket cart full of little boys and girls. Silverheels was doing his best for the hospital.

Polly and Carola helped Susan with the

balloons until the last one floated away. "Thank goodness, that's over!" said Susan, just as though she hadn't been having as much fun as the little girls.

"Let's look at the cat show," said Carola. "I want to see the kittens you said had come."

They started for Three Gates but suddenly Polly stopped.

"There's that queer table!" she exclaimed. "I saw the sign 'White Elephant Table' and I asked Grandma why 'white elephants' and she said it was just things that cluttered and you didn't want any longer. Let's look at it."

Very uninteresting things,—white elephants,—the little girls thought as they inspected the table. Plates, ugly vases, all sorts of odds and ends, and yet people were buying them.

During the time Polly was selling balloons, the cat show increased to thirty boxes and the judges made their inspection. To Polly's sur-

prise, she found a blue ribbon tied to the box where Mittens lay lazily opening and shutting his big yellow eyes.

"The judges said he was the handsomest and best cared-for cat of his class," explained Arthur Kendall, who had charge of the show.

Polly nearly burst with pride to have her pet thus honored. Blue ribbons decorated two other boxes, one containing a lovely white Angora belonging to Miss Emily Parks; the other, four cunning tiger-striped kittens playing about their proud mother.

"Have many people come to see the kitties?" Polly asked, and learned that Arthur already had nearly seven dollars in nickels, and the cat show did not close till six. He expected to take in at least ten dollars.

At six, Silverheels, too, finished his task. He had earned fifteen dollars for the hospital.

When darkness fell, Mother let Polly walk

the length of the street to see the colored lights and the people dancing to the music of the hurdy-gurdy.

Then, it seemed, little girls who lived on Spring Street went to bed just as though Three Gates were the usual quiet home. Mittens was to stay indoors also, and as consolation to both, Mittens wore his blue ribbon and was allowed to curl on Polly's bed until Mother should come up. Then he must go down to his cushion in the kitchen.

CHAPTER TWELVE

Tells about the Chestnut Picnic

A WEEK later, Jack Frost paid a second visit to Longfield. He took all the flowers from the gardens and the ferns from the woods. The leaves were pinched from all the trees except the evergreens. Those he let alone. Little they cared for frosty nights or nipping winds. They intended to keep their green dresses all winter.

But with all the damage, Jack Frost did one helpful thing. He opened the chestnut burrs so that their shiny nuts fell to the ground.

Not many chestnuts grew near Longfield, but Mr. Thorne owned a wood-lot in the real country and upon it were a number of nut-trees. Every year the Thorne children went chestnutting, and usually invited their friends.

Up to this time, the chestnut picnic had been chiefly for Susan and Dutee. This year, Susan didn't wish to go. She said she was tired of picnics and she didn't like chestnuts, anyway. Mrs. Thorne did not try to persuade her. She hoped Susan would change her mind, but Carola should go and Polly Winsor was to be invited. There would be plenty of room in the big car for Mrs. Thorne and the chauffeur, for Dutee and Harry Emerson and Arthur Kendall, for Polly and Carola and the lunch. Even then there would still be room for Susan and her friend Leslie Peterson.

Susan wouldn't change her mind and she didn't go. Carola and Polly thought she was very silly.

That Saturday morning shone glorious, with a cool breeze and a warm sun. Polly didn't know the road to the chestnut grove and she thought it lovely. Many farmhouses sat along

its edges and there were cows in the fields, black-and-white Holsteins and cream-colored Jerseys and red Ayrshires, and just plain cows which didn't belong to any important cow families. They had kind faces, and probably gave plenty of milk for the children to drink.

After a time the farms grew less frequent and the country became more hilly. The state roads changed to gravel ones and then to narrow wood roads and finally there was only a cart-path. Frank stopped the car.

"We could go a little farther," he said to Mrs. Thorne, "but the road ahead looks washed, and I must keep the car where I can turn around."

"We are almost there," said Mrs. Thorne. "We will walk the rest of the way."

Dutee, Harry, and Arthur piled out in a hurry, but they took their full share of the packages and baskets. Dutee expected to get

a great many nuts. Mrs. Thorne had her doubts. The trees were old and not bearing so well, and one of the largest had fallen the previous winter. And one never could be sure that other people would not find the trees and take the nuts, though they belonged to Mr. Thorne.

To reach the chestnut grove one walked right into the woods, wild woods with dried leaves of many winters underfoot, and underbrush and fallen branches, quite unlike the tidy, cleaned-up woods near Longfield.

The boys ran ahead out of sight, but Carola and Polly stayed close to Mrs. Thorne. Getting lost in that place was a different matter from mistaking one's way in Longfield. Much good it would do Polly to know her mother's name and her own, and exactly where she lived, if she didn't meet a single person to whom to tell it.

"All right, Mother!" Dutee shouted back. "Nobody has taken the nuts."

Very tall those chestnut-trees stood, so it was fortunate that nearly all the burrs had been pried open by Jack Frost's busy fingers. Had they still been tight-shut, the boys would have wanted to climb the trees to shake down the burrs, and when three boys climb chestnut-trees, there are three chances that somebody may tumble and bump a head or perhaps break an arm.

Polly and Carola each carried a little basket. What fun it was to hunt in the fallen leaves for the shining nuts and poke into crannies with a long stick to rout out any trying to hide!

The boys left the loose chestnuts for the little girls to collect, and filled their baskets with burrs which had fallen unopened. They sat on flat rocks and pounded the prickly burrs

open, and did not seem to mind when the prickles stuck in their fingers.

Mrs. Thorne also pounded burrs open and divided between Carola and Polly the nuts they contained. Presently Frank came up. He had locked the car safely and now he wanted a share of the fun. He climbed a tree at once because he saw a very desirable bunch of burrs which had not fallen. When he reached a good place, he braced himself and took hold of a limb and shook it as hard as he could shake, and down came the burrs.

Polly was surprised to find that in the greenest burrs the nuts were not dark brown as she was accustomed to think of chestnuts, but almost pure white, or white spotted with brown. Mrs. Thorne told her that all the nuts had once been white, but as they ripened they grew darker and their shells became tougher and thicker.

Lunch time came quite soon, for they had driven nearly sixty miles from Longfield. The boys and Frank collected twigs and sticks to build a fire on a flat rock. The rock had a deep crack, so that a frying-pan could be balanced on its edges and the fire built below. The rock was already blackened by smoke because the Thornes always used it for a fireplace when they held a chestnut picnic.

The frying-pan was large, and that was lucky, because it could hold such a quantity of bacon and eggs. Mrs. Thorne lost count of how many eggs she cooked and passed over to the boys or to Frank. Every one of those three boys seemed to be entirely hollow inside, which is nothing unusual for boys.

But they didn't spend all their time eating bacon and eggs and lamb chops. Harry cut two big loaves into a great many slices of bread, and Arthur and Dutee buttered them. There

seemed little for Carola and Polly to do, so they sat still and let the boys wait on them.

Frank attended to the kettle of hot chocolate at the upper end of the blaze and served it in white enamel cups with convenient handles. Instead of sugar, there were marshmallows. Carola and Polly each had two marshmallows and thought that was rather reckless until Carola saw that her brother had taken four.

"Mother, look at Dutee!" she exclaimed. "He put four marshmallows in his cup."

"Telltale," said Dutee.

Mrs. Thorne didn't seem to hear either of them. At times, mothers are conveniently deaf.

Carola really didn't care how sweet Dutee chose to make his chocolate. It was so lovely and warm there in the golden October sunshine with the spicy odor of the woods and of the pleasant little fire. Besides, Carola knew that

the big thermos jar beyond Polly was full of caramel ice-cream, and that there were little cakes with vanilla and chocolate icing to eat with it. Oh, a very superior picnic—this chestnutting frolic!

When the cakes were finished and every particle of the ice-cream was scraped from the jar, they burned the paper plates and paper napkins and the wooden spoons. Only the thermos jar and the kettle and frying-pan and cups remained to take home. Except for crumbs, which the ants would enjoy, and another coat of black on the rock fireplace, nothing was left to tell the tale of the picnic.

Back to the chestnuts went everybody. Mrs. Thorne would not let any more burrs be knocked off the trees. She wanted some left for the squirrels. Dutee said the squirrels liked acorns just as well and that there were plenty of oak-trees in the woods. When Polly

heard this, she felt better about the chestnuts. She did not wish any squirrel to go hungry because she had taken too many.

At four o'clock, Mrs. Thorne said they must start for home. Eighteen quarts of nuts had been collected. How fragrant they smelled, and how satiny smooth they felt to one's fingers!

A rather tired party came back to the big limousine. Polly was glad to see that Frank had already turned it around and that it was headed for home. She and Carola and Arthur and Mrs. Thorne all sat on the soft cushioned back seat, and Dutee and Harry on the little pull-out chairs. Frank sat alone in front.

When they came out of the woods the sun was low, and before they reached Longfield it was dark and Frank had turned on the headlights. Just as they were leaving the real country, Frank stopped the car so suddenly

that everybody was jerked forward and the engine stalled.

"Keep still, everybody!" exclaimed Dutee. "Don't move! There's a skunk under the car!"

Every one sat as though frozen. Polly and Carola peered from the window.

"Are you sure it is under us?" whispered Mrs. Thorne.

Frank pointed silently to the left side of the road. Coming slowly from under the car and walking along in the wheel-track, in the full glare of the lights was the pretty little black-and-white animal which had given them such a surprise. Not hurrying in the least, it picked its way to the stone wall by the side of the road and went over it into an orchard.

Frank started the engine and everybody began to talk. Carola thought it a pity that so pretty a little animal should be so disagreeable.

Dutee said he was going to get a baby skunk and tame it, and Harry said he knew a boy who had done it.

And while they were all talking, the big car slipped silently into Longfield, to leave Polly at Three Gates with the memory of a lovely day behind her, and two quarts of chestnuts to share with her family.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Tells about Polly's Birthday Present

POLLY'S birthday was the tenth of March, and yet, on the first of November Mother took her into town to choose her present.

For Polly's birthday gift from Mother was spread over the whole year and many people would consider it the nicest gift that could come to any one, little or big. The present was a new book on the first day of every month of the year, and Polly might choose the book.

That didn't mean that Polly went into town every month. Sometimes, when she was in the children's department of the big city bookstore, she had hard work to choose between several books. When this happened, Polly's

second choice usually appeared the next time the date came for a new book. Sometimes Polly found a book in the Longfield Public Library which she felt was written on purpose for her.

The Longfield children had a room in the library which belonged entirely to them. Grown people might come in and look around, and the children were polite to them, but they were *not* expected to stay. The room belonged to the children, and such a pretty room it was, with low tables and chairs and no high shelves where the most desirable books could perch. Every shelf in the children's room was within easy reach. Sunshine streamed across it and the windows opened on a green lawn. On the walls hung lovely pictures and on the end of a bookcase stood a beautiful little model of the *Santa Maria,* the ship which brought Columbus to America. Cretonne curtains, gay

with red and yellow apples, draped the windows. Best of all, the two young ladies in charge loved the children and liked to have them come. Polly didn't know which of the two she would rather find behind the desk. Miss Burt wore a yellow smock because she had dark hair and eyes. Miss Canfield was fair, so her smock was green. Both smocks had collars and cuffs of the bright cretonne which hung at the windows.

A big cat named Henry of Navarre helped manage the children's room. To catch mice in the library basement was his real duty, but he attended to this at night. During the afternoon he usually slept on the window-seat or on one of the low tables. The first children to arrive at the library after school at once chose the table where Henry lay, and sat down to read where they might pet him between the turning of pages. His fur suit was coal-black,

except for three inches of snow-white at the end of his tail.

Miss Burt told the children that their kitty was named for a French king, Henry, the soldier of Navarre, who, long ago, rode into battle, wearing a suit of armor and a helmet to protect his head from swords and arrows. This was long before the time of muskets and cannon. Above his helmet rose a plume of white feathers, and where the white plume led, King Henry's soldiers followed and fought for him.

Polly liked the library cat, but didn't think him so nice as her Mittens. His fur was not nearly so soft and silky. Henry was what Polly called a " hard " cat to touch, but he was purry and gracious to everybody who came to the children's room.

Miss Burt kept the books with the loveliest pictures on shelves by themselves, and there

was a sign above the case: " Only Clean Hands May Touch These Books."

So, whenever she went to the library, Polly was most careful to see that her hands were absolutely clean, in order that she might take these books. Miss Burt knew all about Polly's birthday present and how there was a book to choose each month. She took pains to show to Polly any new book she thought Polly might like to own. During October, Polly had fallen in love with one of these.

Its name was " The Lost Merbaby," and it had charming silhouette illustrations showing the fishes and the mermaids and the cunning merbaby and the kind fisher-people who took care of it when the careless little mermaids lost it.

Miss Burt gave Polly the book to read and Polly liked it so much that she was two hours that day getting home from the library, when

it needn't have taken more than fifteen minutes. Grandma was shocked. She said that Polly might have been run over at any crossing.

Polly told Grandma that she didn't read when crossing the streets, but she didn't tell her how she had walked into one lamp-post, one baby-carriage, three trees, and a fat policeman, while she read that book through twice.

She read it five times more before taking it back to the library. Mother also enjoyed the story and loved the illustrations. She agreed that it was a nice book for Polly to add to her own library.

So this morning they were going into the city to buy the birthday book and some new shoes and a new winter coat and hat for Polly. You can see that the occasion was really important.

Mother thought they had better take the

early train because the stores would be less crowded in the morning. Too many people would be there, anyway.

Polly liked to ride on the train. This Saturday morning it was disappointing because there were not enough seats for the passengers. She had to sit on Mother's lap and did not have a very good view. A journey is always more interesting if one sits next to the window.

The coat was the first thing to consider. Polly was far more interested in the big dolls dressed in the new clothes for children than she was in the coat itself. Mother was not easily suited, and Polly was growing tired of having coats tried on before Mother found one she liked. Then Polly stopped looking at the dolls and the other children and, for the first time, looked at the coat she had on.

The soft pretty cloth was of a color not quite brown and certainly not gray, but with grayish

shades in it. It fitted nicely, but left room for growing.

"Do you like this one?" Mother asked Polly.

Polly said she did, and that it was comfortable and plenty warm enough.

"It is the pick of the lot for line and material," said the salesgirl, when Mrs. Winsor said she would take it.

"What did she mean?" Polly asked as the girl took the card Mrs. Winsor gave her and went away to copy the address.

"That it is pretty and well-made," said Mother.

"The merbaby next?" asked Polly, without another thought for the coat. What is a new coat in comparison with a new book?

"Shoes next," said Mother. "They won't take long, just high moccasin shoes for school this winter."

"I hope I don't have to try on so many shoes as coats," said Polly.

She didn't. The first pair fitted.

"A hat next," said Mother.

Such a pretty hat, when Mother found what she liked! Not exactly the same color as the coat, but a shade lighter, and with one pink rose in the precise place where a rose would do the most good. Carola would like Polly's new coat and hat. All the little girls thought Polly had pretty clothes.

"And *now* the merbaby?" Polly inquired hopefully.

"And now, the merbaby," said Mother, and they started for the bookstore.

Too many people in town that Saturday morning, even though it were still quite early! Polly held Mother's hand tightly. She had no intention of getting lost, though she could tell a kind policeman just where she lived.

The lady in the bookstore knew Mother and smiled at Polly.

"And what is to be the birthday book this month?" she asked.

Polly's cheeks were pink with excitement as she told her.

"Oh, that is a nice choice," said the bookstore lady, and she brought Polly a copy of the "Lost Merbaby."

"Here it is," she said. "I'll wrap it for you, and then I want to show you some of the new books which are coming in for Christmas."

Polly's eyes shone. Christmas meant an extra book from Mother and usually one from Uncle Jack. She looked eagerly at the new Doctor Dolittle book and at the new book of verses which Christopher Robin's father had written for him. Above her head the bookstore lady and Mother smiled at each other.

"If you have other errands to do, Mrs. Win-

sor, leave her here with the books. I shall be right around all the time."

"Would you like to stay here while I do some more shopping?" Mother asked.

Polly decided to stay.

"Take off your coat, then," said Mother, "and be very careful of the books."

"I shall read only this one about Christopher Robin," said Polly, as she settled herself in the chair beside the bookstore lady's desk.

Mrs. Winsor was gone almost an hour but she came back to find Polly still reading.

"I have decided about my December book," said Polly as soon as she saw her. "I just must have the new Christopher Robin book, Mother dear."

"I'll remember," said the bookstore lady. "Come again, Polly. Here, don't forget your merbaby. On December first, Christopher Robin will be waiting for you."

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Tells about the Library Play

GRANDMA never discovered to whom the little brown door-mat belonged. It still hung in the shed, awaiting an owner. And still Fair Rosamond did not come home.

Polly often thought of her lost child. She concluded that it had been useless to provide Fair Rosamond with her name and address written on a paper in her pocket. She said so to Carola.

"Perhaps the person who found Fair Rosamond couldn't read," suggested Carola.

Polly couldn't credit this idea. In her experience, only very little children were unable to read. But of course, it was possible that

such a child found Fair Rosamond and threw away the paper in her pocket.

Grandma thought the paper could not have been there. What Mother thought, she didn't tell Polly. It was too terrible to put into words that Kerry had simply chewed up that unfortunate child.

"Would you like Calamity Jane to make you a visit?" Carola asked. "She may come if you want her."

Polly didn't like Calamity Jane, though she was too polite to say so. She said that Jacob and Moses kept her too busy to entertain a visitor just then. Calamity Jane in the place of Fair Rosamond! Her very name was enough.

Dutee and Susan were arguing in the next room and their remarks puzzled Polly. She thought them over on the way home.

"Mother," she asked, at the supper table,

" what is the least common multiple? Dutee wanted Susan to help him find it."

Uncle Jack laid down his fork. " Great Scott!" he exclaimed. " Haven't they found that thing yet? As long ago as I was in school they were hunting for it."

Mother and Grandma laughed and Polly looked at Uncle Jack. She didn't in the least know what he meant, but from his face she knew he was joking.

" It is a lesson in numbers, Polly," Mother explained.

Polly smiled politely, but she wasn't amused. A wave of longing for Fair Rosamond swept over her.

Mittens seemed to know she was lonely, for after supper he was very frisky, and batted his tiny Teddy bear about the sitting-room floor, crouching low and springing upon it as though he were a real tiger.

"Mittens, I am glad you are only a foot long," Grandma said. "If you were twelve feet in length, I should really be afraid of you."

Mittens twelve feet long! Polly tried to think how he would look that size. He would stretch the width of the kitchen. No, she preferred him the size he was, and that size seemed precisely right when she went upstairs at half-past seven to find him curled very neatly in Fair Rosamond's empty bed.

Next morning at school, Miss Rand talked to the children about books. The week, it seemed, was "Good Book Week." One by one, Miss Rand spoke of interesting books and asked how many of the children knew them.

Some knew three or four and some didn't know any. Dotty and Louise and Carola and Polly knew nearly all.

Miss Rand then told the children when they went home, to count the books, each child in

her own home. To-morrow, she would ask how many they found.

Polly was dismayed, for there were a great many books in Three Gates. Many had belonged to Grandpa Clifford, who had been minister of the white church where Polly went. Many had belonged to Daddy. Mother had ever so many, and so had Uncle Jack. Polly herself owned four shelves full of books. Books were in every room of the house except the bathroom, and one sometimes got in there. Even the kitchen held its share. Uncle Jack said they might not have coal, but they surely had books.

"I can never count them all," she said to Carola at recess.

"Neither can I count Daddy's library," said Carola. "It's a whole room full of books."

"Let's ask Miss Rand," Polly suggested.

Miss Rand saw their difficulty at once.

Polly and Carola might count just their own books and be excused from those belonging to other people in their families.

So the next morning, Polly reported the seventy-six books which were her very own. Carola had one hundred and five, " but some were once Susan's," she said.

All the other children made their reports. Miss Rand was pleased. There were both books and magazines in every home represented by the second grade.

Book Week was also being celebrated at the children's room in the Public Library. Miss Burt and Miss Canfield wrote a play for the children to act.

In the play, a little girl named Dorothy, fell asleep over her lessons, and while she slept, the different characters in the stories she liked best crept out of their books and came alive and talked with each other. Alice came from

" Alice in Wonderland," and Kit and Kat from the " Dutch Twins," and Curdie from the fairy tale, and Tom Canty from the " Prince and the Pauper," along with characters from other books which Dorothy liked to read.

Polly was Heidi, the little Swiss girl, and Mother made her the proper kind of dress, just like the picture in the book.

Carola couldn't be in the play, because of a music-lesson, but Dotty was a cuckoo clock behind the scenes and cried " Cuckoo! " to mark the hours.

The play was on Friday after school, and mothers and other children were invited. Grandma had promised to come, since Mother couldn't.

When the curtain rose, there sat Dorothy, trying to study at her desk. Soon she fell asleep to dream of her story-book friends. On either side the books stood in orderly rows,

looking like books on a shelf, with their different-colored backs and neatly lettered titles. But, at the proper moment, each character pushed aside the back of his book, which was really a cloth curtain, and came out to talk with the little people from the other stories.

Polly thought the rehearsals for the play great fun. To be sure, she had to keep very still behind her curtain, crouched ready to spring out of her book when the time came.

A little Greek girl named Tanis took the part of Dorothy and she slept so conscientiously, with her head pillowed on her arm, that up to the last rehearsal, she had never even *seen* the other children in the play. At the dress rehearsal, she asked Miss Burt if she might open her eyes and look, just enough to see the characters pop out of their books. Of course, in the real play, before the mothers, she wouldn't peep once.

Miss Burt said she might open her eyes. It would be a pity for Tanis to be in that play and only hear the story-book people, not see them.

A little Russian boy, Boris Troubotsky, was Tom Canty. His family was very proud that Boris was to have a part in the library play, and his father at once bought him a new pair of shoes. Boris brought them to the library beforehand to show Miss Burt. The shoes were bright yellow and squeaked loudly when he walked, but Miss Burt said Boris might wear them.

On the afternoon of the play, not only his father and mother, but his six brothers and sisters, including the baby, came to see Boris wear the new yellow shoes and be Tom Canty, coming out of the "Prince and the Pauper." They knew the story, for Boris told it to them, putting it into Russian so they could understand it better.

Henry, the library cat, took part in the play. "Puss-in-Boots" was one of the stage books, and at the proper moment, to the great delight of the audience, Miss Canfield saw that Henry walked out of it. Henry did not care a rap for the applause which greeted him; he was used to being with a great many people, but he did *not* like the four bright-red cloth boots which Miss Canfield had fitted to his paws. The instant he bounced out of his book, he began to shake his front paws, and off flew two red boots. Actors and audience alike were rocking with laughter, but little cared Henry. He shook his hind feet just as hard and as crossly, and then he walked slowly and scornfully off the stage, leaving the four little red boots behind him.

Henry wasn't expected to do this, of course, and neither was Kit, when he followed Kat from the "Dutch Twins," expected to tumble

over the edge of the book and go down on his knees. But that was quite in keeping with Kit's usual behavior. Dotty, as the cuckoo clock, got excited and sounded the hour rather oftener than needed.

The mothers thought the play too short. "Do it over! Please do it over!" they called, and then they clapped their hands until Miss Burt said they might see it again.

This time, Robin Hood caught his foot and tore the back off his book. But that was nothing, for the backs of books do come off, when they are read as many times as children read "Robin Hood."

"Puss-in-Boots" could not be induced to play again, and the cuckoo clock struck whenever no one else was talking. As soon as the clock began to strike, the audience began to laugh.

Polly was amused by Henry, but rather

shocked by Dotty's behavior as the clock. Grandma was comforting and said it didn't matter. Everybody else was having a good time, so why shouldn't Dotty?

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Tells about the Thanksgiving Surprises

AT Thanksgiving time, Aunt Barbara usually came to Longfield with Uncle Charles and Ruth and Clifford and little Martha. Such fun to have a houseful of guests to share the turkey and play games after dinner!

Sometimes one cousin or another was at Three Gates for a visit during the summer vacation, but Thanksgiving was the only time when the whole family came.

So it was a disappointment to hear from Mother that this year no aunt and uncle and cousins would drive on from Buffalo.

"Aunt Barbara isn't feeling well," Mother explained. "And, Polly, she wants Grandma to come there."

Thanksgiving without Grandma! Polly couldn't imagine such a state of affairs.

"I shall be at home from Wednesday till Monday," Mother went on. "The visit will do Grandma good. She will start Tuesday night and come back on Sunday. We are planning a surprise for her when she gets back."

Mother and Polly were talking in the workroom where Uncle Jack was bending over his table with a pencil and triangle. Instead of his coat he wore a brown smock which Grandma made. This didn't look funny to Polly, for she was quite used to seeing her young uncle at work in a smock.

"What is the surprise?" she asked. "Am I to be in it?"

Uncle Jack chuckled. "Very much in it, I expect. With hands and feet and hair before we get through."

"What is it?" Polly asked again.

"You know how the pretty breakfast-nook makes the rest of the kitchen look shabby," Mother began.

"Look out, Edith," commented her brother. "Better wait till Mother is actually gone."

"Oh, Polly can keep a secret," said Mrs. Winsor. "You won't tell Grandma, will you, darling?"

"Not till you say I may," Polly replied eagerly. "I didn't tell her about the vacuum-cleaner last Christmas, Uncle Jack."

"So you didn't," her uncle admitted. "You were a good sport."

This was high praise from Uncle Jack, and Polly beamed with pride.

"We are planning to do over the kitchen," Mother explained, "paint the walls and the woodwork and varnish the floor. Grandma spends so much time in the kitchen that we

mean to make it as pretty and pleasant as we can for her."

"My! how nice!" said Polly, her eyes shining. "What color will you paint it?"

"The woodwork scarlet, and the walls pale green with big black cats stenciled all over them," replied Uncle Jack lazily.

Polly looked at him. His face was perfectly serious. She looked at Mother. Mother was smiling.

"It isn't so, is it, Mother?" she asked. "I do *not* think red woodwork and black cats will be one bit pretty."

"Neither do we," said Mother. "Uncle Jack likes to hear himself talk. If he wants to do it that way, I sha'n't help him at all."

"I sha'n't, either," said Polly firmly.

"Now I think black cats and scarlet woodwork would be a striking combination," observed Uncle Jack.

"I agree with you," said Mother. "Sufficiently striking to knock the family out of the house."

Knowing that secret made Polly more willing to part with Grandma for Thanksgiving. And, anyway, nobody ought to be selfish when Aunt Barbara was ill and wanted to see her mother.

Still, Polly was glad to find that the kitchen was not to be turned upside down until after the Thanksgiving dinner. Mother roasted a chicken and they ate the pies Grandma made before going to Buffalo. Uncle Jack advised Polly to eat a great deal. It might be her last square meal for several days.

"What is home without a kitchen? Who can cook without a kitchen?" he inquired.

Mother said that as long as there was an electric toaster and a coffee percolator in the house, she didn't intend to starve. And, per-

sonally, she didn't intend to paint the gas-stove, whatever Uncle Jack might mean to do with it.

As soon as dinner was over on Thanksgiving Day, preparations began. While Mother and Polly did the dishes, Uncle Jack completely covered the kitchen floor with old newspapers. He brushed the ceiling thoroughly. He mixed some powdery stuff with water in a pail. With a big wide brush he made the ceiling a soft cream-color.

This did not take him long. Next came the walls, and Polly's mind was relieved to see that the paint which Mother and Uncle Jack were mixing was not green at all but a pretty color, not exactly buff and not yellow, but a deep ivory with brown undertones. Polly thought nobody but her mother and uncle could have made such a lovely color. They took great pains with it, trying dabs on the wall, and

mixing and mixing again until finally they both said, "There!"

Then they began to paint, Mother on one side of the room and Uncle Jack on another. Polly watched in fascination, and her fingers fairly itched to get hold of a paint-brush.

"Mother, mayn't I help?" she begged. "I'll be *so* careful. I do want to paint. Please let me."

"It isn't as easy as it looks," said Mother. "We have to make the strokes all the same way and to have just the right amount of paint on our brushes."

"It *looks* such fun," said Polly soberly.

"Edith, she could paint a chair," said Uncle Jack suddenly.

"She could," agreed Mother, "only that paint isn't mixed."

"I'll stop and mix it," said Uncle Jack good-naturedly, and he came down from the

step-ladder. Polly flew at him and hugged him as high up as she could reach.

"Go put on your very oldest dress," said Mother, "that faded pink one I said you needn't wear any more. And take off your good socks and shoes, darling. On Grandma's work-table are some socks she said weren't worth mending. And your old sneakers with the hole in the toe."

Mother had on a pink smock and her hair tied up in a duster, like a Red Cross head-dress. Uncle Jack wore his rumpled brown smock. So, when Polly hurried out of her pretty Thanksgiving garments and into the discarded ones, she tied another duster about her head to look like Mother.

When she was dressed, she found one of the chairs lying on its side on the newspaper-covered kitchen table. Polly could try her hand at painting its legs and seat and then some-

body would turn it so she could do the back. A narrow brush and a pot of paint stood ready.

Polly peeped anxiously into that pot. The paint was clear yellow just like that of the breakfast-nook. It seemed that the chairs and all the woodwork were to be made this pretty yellow. There was no indication of any red paint, and certainly there was no sign of any black cats.

Polly went eagerly to work, filling her brush just as Uncle Jack showed her, and wiping it on the edge of the can. She was very careful not to spill.

After an hour, Uncle Jack stopped for a cigarette and Mother and Polly for a piece of candy, but they rested only a few minutes. Polly was as anxious to finish that chair as the others were to complete the walls.

"You've made a good job of that chair,"

said Uncle Jack, when Polly announced it done. "Couldn't do better myself."

The walls, it appeared, must have a second coat of paint, but one was enough for Polly's chair. "May I do the other two to-morrow?" she begged. "And the legs of the zinc-topped table, and—oh, the waste-basket and the radiator and the knife-tray?"

"We'll see," laughed Mother. "You mustn't spend all the Thanksgiving recess working in this smell of turpentine."

"But painting is *such* fun!" sighed Polly. "What color are you going to make the floor?"

The floor was to be stained a sunny brown, with a finish which water couldn't spot. When Polly had finished their yellow dresses, all the chairs were to have trimmings of black lines.

"But no cats?" asked Polly.

"No cats," said Mother, "only the dear Mittens who doesn't like this smelly place. We shall have to put his cushion in the sitting-room to-night, on the rug before the fire."

When the kitchen was finished it was truly as pleasant as could be. The washed windows shone like rainbows. Each had a new sash-curtain made of thin blue and white muslin. A new blue-enamelled quart-measure replaced the rusty tin one.

The kitchen wasn't finished till Sunday morning, but it was worth all the work put into it. Polly was so proud of her chairs that she brought Carola in from church school to see them. Carola was frankly envious.

"They never let me paint anything, not even the hen-house," she declared. "Susan and Dutee did that and they used enough paint to cover the barn. Daddy said so. They got it on themselves and on the roof and on the big

maple-tree and on Wicky and on Beware-the-dog. They even got it on Grandmother, though nobody knows how."

"I got some on myself," Polly confessed, "but I had on very old clothes. And Mittens was painty because he sat in a chair that wasn't quite dry. We kept Kerry out of the kitchen. Don't you think Grandma will be pleased?"

"She'll be queer if she isn't," said Carola. "I wish our kitchen was just like it."

Grandma's train reached Longfield at dark, and Uncle Jack met her with Justin. Polly and Mother were at the door, ready with hugs and kisses. Grandma was to find the surprise for herself.

There was much to ask about Aunt Barbara and her family and her new house and the holiday dinner. Grandma looked at Polly's mother.

"You look tired, Edith," she said. "I'm afraid this has been too much for you. I ought not to have gone."

"I don't feel tired," said her daughter. "Of course we've missed you dreadfully, but it's only fair for Barbara to have you once in a while. Let's have a cup of tea. Polly, don't you want to put the cups on the table in the breakfast-nook?"

That was precisely what Polly most wanted to do. She danced into the kitchen. Mother and Grandma followed slowly, still talking, and Uncle Jack, with his hands in his pockets, sauntered after. They were fairly into the dusky kitchen when he suddenly switched on the light.

Grandma was right in the middle of a sentence about Aunt Barbara. She stopped short and looked around as though she couldn't believe her eyes.

"Why—why!" she began. "Why, what *have* you been doing?"

"Do you like it, Grandma?" asked Polly, jumping up and down. "It's a s'prise for you. I painted the chairs, Grandma!"

"*Like* it," said Grandma, and she looked as though she were ready to cry. "You dears!" she said. "Nobody ever had such good, thoughtful children! Edith, this is why you look tired. Oh, what a pretty place! You clever, clever people!"

Everybody hugged and kissed everybody else, and Grandma admired everything, from the ceiling to the floor, from Polly's chairs to the new quart-measure. Oh, Grandma appreciated every bit of the time and work and love and skill and thought put into that newly-painted kitchen.

"And to think my little Polly painted the chairs!" she exclaimed again.

"Mother did the black lines," said loyal Polly. Just then the front door-bell rang.

Uncle Jack answered it. They heard him open the door and then there was a pause, followed by an exclamation.

"Stop that, Kerry! Stop it, you little demon! *Come* back! Stay inside here! Polly!" he shouted, "come here right away. Mother! Edith! All of you! Come!"

Everybody hurried to the hall door. Something must have happened. Grandma had taught Uncle Jack better manners than to stand at the front door and yell for his family to come and greet a caller.

Yet that was precisely what he had done, only the caller was most unexpected. On the piazza, just at the top of the step, in the glow of the porch-light, stood Fair Rosamond!

Polly gave one scream and rushed to her. There was no mistake. This was Fair Rosa-

POLLY DANCED ABOUT THE PORCH. *Page 203.*

mond herself, with a little scar on the side of her forehead to show where she once met with a bad fall. But this was not the dress she wore the night she went away. Fair Rosamond had never owned a pretty rose gingham smock with knickers to match.

Screaming with joy, Polly danced about the porch before she rushed in from the sharp air. Uncle Jack shut the door behind her, but before he did so, he looked hard at the shrubbery, and peered out into the darkness beyond the circle of light.

In the hall, the family examined Fair Rosamond and her new outfit.

"She *did* have her name in her pocket, and so she came back!" Polly gasped. "See, it's here now! Why, this is a different paper."

"It is a letter," said Mother, taking it from Polly's excited fingers. "Let's see what it says."

"DEAR MOTHER PAULINE," the letter read. "Please don't spank me for not coming home before. The truth is I got lost in a thicket of syringa bushes. I had to camp out there till a man with a rake rescued me. And then my clothes were so shabby that I thought I had better have a new dress before you saw me.

"I went to a dressmaker, and she was so slow that I shall never try her again. I thought she never *would* finish my clothes.

"It was most lucky, dear Mother, that you thoughtfully put your name and address in my pocket. Parents should always do this as it prevents a wandering child from being lost forever. Because of this care on your part, I came home to you as soon as my new dress was ready. I hope you like the color I chose. It is very fashionable at present. And please forgive me and love me as you used to do."

"Mother!" gasped Polly, "where *has* Fair Rosamond been?"

"Stuck in somebody's syringa hedge, I should think," smiled Mother.

"I do wish I could say 'Thank you' to whoever made this pretty dress and brought Fair Rosamond home. I *wish* I could tell her how glad I am!"

"Why, you have," said Uncle Jack lazily. "Your shouts of exultation were certainly heard as far as the street, or the bushes by the front gate. That's why I called you to the door."

"Oh!" cried Polly, hugging her child again. "Oh, Mother, the kitchen is all pretty, and Grandma's back from Aunt Barbara's, and Fair Rosamond has come home!"

THE END